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Esher, Surrey

5 bedrooms | 5 bathrooms | 7 reception rooms | Terrace | Swimming pool | Tennis Court | Gym & sauna | Cellar | Double garage
EPC C | Freehold | Council Tax band H

A character home located in a gated private road and situated in a plot of about 0.86 acres with a charming south-facing garden and woodland backdrop.

A3 0.5 miles | Esher town centre 1.25 miles | Esher train station 2 miles | Cobham 3.5 miles

Guide price £4,250,000

Knight Frank Esher
adam.burlison@knightframk.com
01372 885688

QUARRENDON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Guide Price: £1,495,000

5 Bedrooms | 4 Reception Rooms | 3 Bathrooms | D EPC

A two-storey barn conversion on 1.3 acres with open countryside views. The property has over 3.500 sq. ft. of flexible living space and seven sets of bi-fold doors to the garden, three sets in the triple aspect sitting room. A private gated entrance opens to a tree-lined drive and the gardens and grounds include lawned areas and a courtyard garden.

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REF: ESH012269875

Esher, Surrey

6 bedrooms | 4 bathrooms | 4 reception rooms | Garage block with self-contained open-plan annexe | Ample parking
Approximately 0.85 acres | EPC G | Freehold | Council Tax band G

An impressive New England-style home located in one of Esher's premier private gated estates, ideally located for Esher town centre.

Esher town centre 700 yards | A3 1 mile

Guide price £3,500,000

Knight Frank Esher
adam.burlison@knightframk.com
013728 85688

Stunning Period Home

Hemingford Grey, Cambridge Huntingdon Station: 4.8 miles (Kings Cross from 50 minutes)

Beautiful village house with exceptional interiors, high ceilings and private gardens. 3 reception rooms, principal en suite bedroom with dressing room, 3 further bedrooms (2 en suite), family bathroom, cloakroom, study, snug/office and landscaped gardens.
Freehold | Council Tax Band = H | EPC = C

4,351 sq ft | Guide £1.95 million

Lucy Banks
Savills Cambridge
01223 081 197
lbanks@savills.com

Ed Meyer
Savills Cambridge
01223 080 746
emeyer@savills.com

savills

Outstanding Country Residence

Tadcaster, North Yorkshire Tadcaster: 1.6 miles, York: 11 miles

Substantial Grade II listed country home which has a seamless blend of period features and contemporary finishes, set in mature formal gardens and paddocks. 5 reception rooms, 6 bedrooms (1 en suite), 4 family bathrooms, study, swimming pool with pool house, 2 2-bedroom cottages, stables, garage, landscaped gardens and paddocks. Freehold | Council Tax Band = H

About 8.53 acres | Guide £3.5 million

Tanya Coffey
Savills York
01904 937 258
tcoffey@savills.com

savills

Surrey, Nr Englefield Green

A fine 18th century mansion house with ancillary dwellings, set within 65 acres and enjoying far-reaching views towards historic Runnymede

M25 (Jct 13): 2.3 miles, M4 (Jct 6): 6.7 miles, Egham station: 1 mile (London Waterloo 42 minutes),
Windsor: 4.5 miles, Heathrow Airport (T5): 5 miles, Central London: 23 miles
Reception hall | Drawing room | Dining room | Sitting room | Summer room | Study | Kitchen/breakfast room
Utility room | Principal bedroom suite | 6 Further bedrooms (1 ensuite) | Family bathroom | Shower room | Roof terrace
4 Ancillary dwellings | Garaging | Gardens and grounds | EPC Rating: House: E, Ancillary dwellings: D
In all about 65 acres

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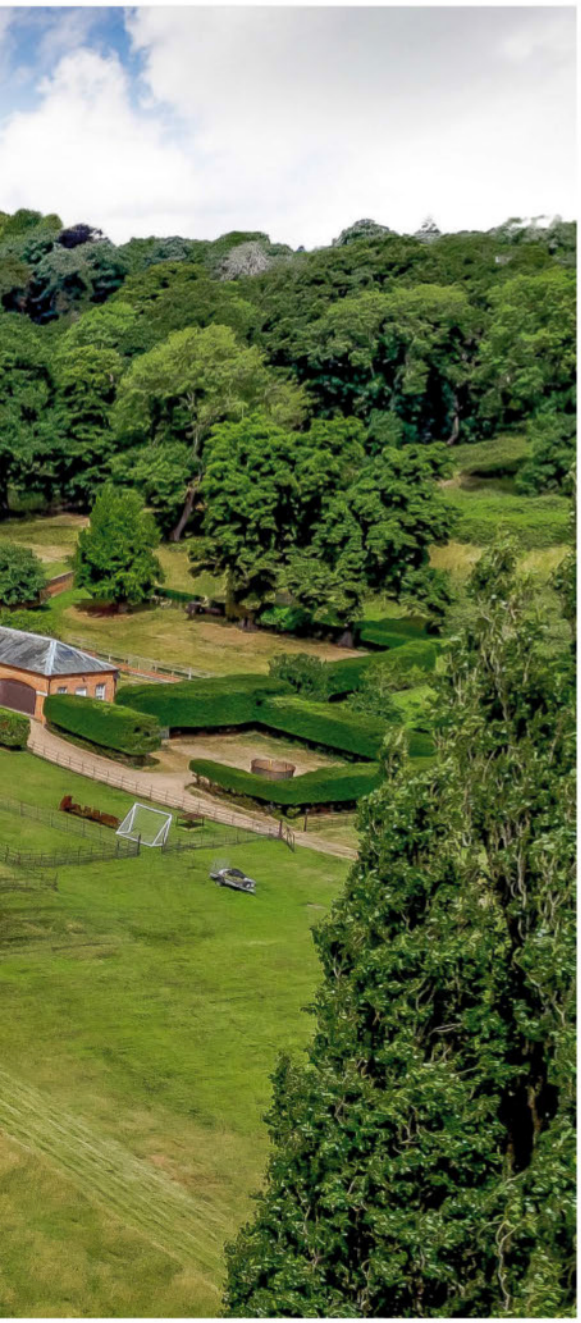
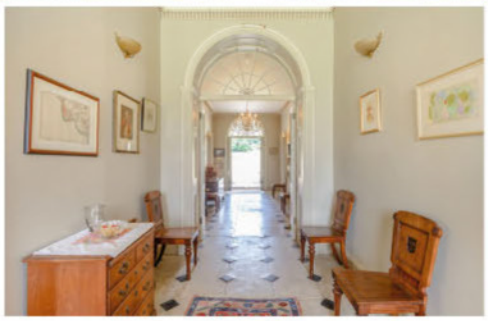
Guide Price £8,000,000





&

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Jo Chadwick
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jo.chadwick@struttandparker.com

REF: ASC012395866

Windsor, Berkshire

5 bedrooms | 3 bathrooms | 4 reception rooms | Garden room/ studio | Access to a 2-acre gated communal garden
Freehold | Council Tax band G

An elegant Grade II listed Georgian period property presented to the highest of standards and set in the heart of Windsor on one of its finest roads.

Windsor Castle 0.5 miles | Windsor & Eton Central railway station 0.5 miles

Guide price £3,500,000

Knight Frank Ascot & Virginia Water
greg.crosse@knightfrank.com
01344 989436

REF: CBM012206685

Oxshott, Surrey

6 bedrooms | 5 bathrooms | 5 reception rooms | Annexe | Double garage | Parking | Approximately 0.74 acres
EPC B | Freehold | Council Tax band H

An attractive modern family home built approximately 10 years ago and situated in the popular Surrey village of Oxshott.

Cobham 3 miles | Esher 3 miles | Guildford 14 miles | Heathrow Airport 18 miles

Guide price £3,850,000

Knight Frank Cobham
nathaniel.bracegirdle@knightframk.com
01932 800998

charles.davenport@knightframk.com
01932 800998

REF: SEV012325354

Sevenoaks, Kent

5 bedrooms | 3 bathrooms | 4 reception rooms | Single garage | Swimming pool | Annexe | Garden | Terrace
EPC E | Freehold | Council Tax band G

Perfectly located just outside Sevenoaks within the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sycamores occupies an excellent position with far-reaching views.

Ide Hill community shop 1.6 miles | Sevenoaks train station 5.9 miles

Guide price £1,575,000

Knight Frank Sevenoaks
matthew.hodder-williams@knightframk.com
01732 807851

REF: ESH012242407

Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey

6 bedrooms | 2 bathrooms | 6 reception rooms | Car port with studio above | Stable & tack room | Garage | Partially walled garden
Approximately 0.5 acres | EPC E | Freehold | Council Tax band H

An impressive and elegant Victorian riverside home set on the banks of the River Thames with a 70ft mooring.

Hampton Station 1.5 miles | Central London 20 miles

Guide price £3,500,000

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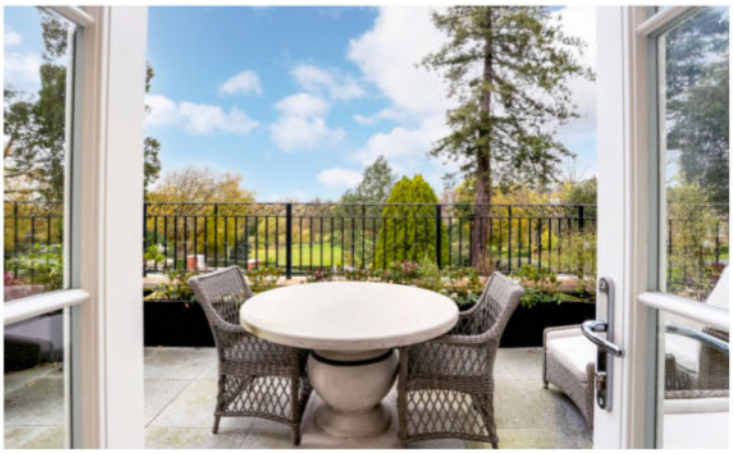

REF: CBM012095480

Cobham, Surrey

2 bedrooms | 2 bathrooms | Reception room | 2 underground car parking spaces | Residents' private gym | Lift
EPC B | Share of freehold | Council Tax band H

Luxury apartment in modern gated development of just seven houses and 22 apartments within a 45 acre estate of private woods and parkland.

Cobham & Stoke D'Abernon train station 1 mile | Cobham 1.4 miles | Oxshott 2.1 miles

Guide price £2,250,000

Knight Frank Cobham
james.harvey@knightframk.com
01932 800998

REF: SEV180051

Ivy Hatch, Kent

4 bedrooms | 3 bathrooms | 3 reception rooms | Terrace | Car port | 6 car parking spaces | Approximately 1.5 acres
EPC E | Freehold | Council Tax band G

A beautifully updated family home taking up a substantial portion of a well-established country house providing character, excellent volumes and fantastic far-reaching south-facing views.

Sevenoaks Station 5.3 miles | Borough Green Station 3.2 miles

Guide price £1,795,000

Knight Frank Sevenoaks
matthew.hodder-williams@knightfrank.com
01732 807851

REF: STW180048

Bledington, Gloucestershire

3 bedrooms | 3 bathrooms | 2 reception rooms | Parking | Terrace | Garden | EPC E | Freehold | Council Tax band G

Quintessential Cotswold stone cottage, situated in an elevated position beside the church in a sought-after village.

Stow-on-the-Wold 4 miles | Kingham 1 mile (London Paddington from 80 minutes)

Guide price £1,200,000

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helen.waddilove@knightframk.com
01451 888130

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Beautiful Windsor Home

Windsor, Berkshire Windsor Castle: 1.3 miles, Heathrow Airport: 10 miles

Generously proportioned and beautifully presented home, set in pretty landscaped gardens on a private estate. 3 reception rooms, kitchen/dining room, principal bedroom suite with dressing room, 4 further en suite bedrooms, further shower room, bedroom 6/games room, double garage and landscaped gardens. Freehold | Council Tax Band = G | EPC = C

5,865 sq ft | Guide £3.5 million

John Henson
Savills Windsor
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john.henson@savills.com

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Tyne Valley Estate

Harlow Hill, Newcastle upon Tyne Corbridge: 7 miles, Hexham: 12 miles

Outstanding residential and commercial farm in an accessible location. 8 bedroom principal farmhouse, 3 cottages, range of traditional and modern farm buildings, livery yard and outdoor arena, 142 acres of arable land and 68 acres of mowing and grazing land.
Freehold | Council Tax Band = H | EPC = E

About 220 acres | Guide £4.5 million

Andrew Black
Savills York
01904 211 804
ablack@savills.com

Sam Gibson
Galbraith
01434 405 975
sam.gibson@galbraithgroup.com

Galbraith

savills

Berkshire, Winkfield

Guide Price £1,975,000

&

An impressive 5-bedroom period residence set within a splendid 19th century manor house

M4 (J6): 5.4 miles, M3 (J3): 9 miles, M25 (J13): 10 miles,
Windsor & Eton Riverside station: 4.7 miles (London Waterloo 58 mins), London Heathrow (T5): 13.8 miles
Reception hall | Sitting room | Dining room | Study | Kitchen/breakfast/family room | Utility room | Cloakroom
Principal bedroom suite | 2 Further bedroom suites | 2 Further bedrooms (1 with roof terrace) | Family bathroom
Double garage | Garden | EPC Rating C

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Berkshire, Old Windsor

Offers in Excess of £4,250,000

&

An imposing Grade II* listed residence, close to the River Thames and historic Runnymede

M4 (J5): 4 miles, Windsor town centre: 2.5 miles, Ascot High Street: 7.2 miles, Heathrow Airport (T5): 7 miles, Central London: 24.7 miles
Reception hall | Drawing room | Dining room | Sitting room | Study | Octagonal music room | Kitchen/breakfast room
Utility room | Cellars | Principal bedroom suite with dressing room and balcony | 2 Further bedroom suites (1 with dressing room)
5 Further bedrooms | 2 Family bath/shower rooms | Studio apartment | Chalet studio | Double garage | Ornamental bell tower
Tennis court | Swimming pool | Pool house | Established gardens including kitchen garden

About 5.5 acres

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OnTheMarket

Dunnington, North Yorkshire — £1,500,000 Offers over

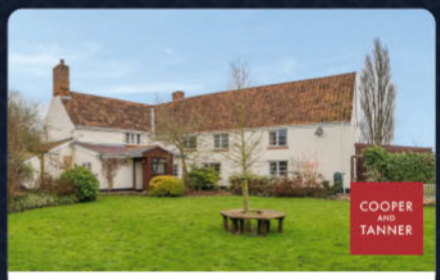
An outstanding family house of more than 5,000 sq. ft. with triple garage and gardens, in a rural location very close to York.

York office 01904 595677

Lewes, East Sussex — £850,000 Offers in region of

A delightful detached 18th century brick and flint cottage with countryside views, one mile from Lewes in semi-rural surroundings.

Lewes 01273 083818



North Curry, Somerset — £1,000,000 Offers over

A beautiful detached five-bedroom farmhouse with numerous reception rooms, indoor swimming pool and over three acres of land.

Bridgwater office 01278 285917

Thornton-Le-Moor, North Yorkshire — £1,000,000 Guide price

An attractive detached country home requiring full modernisation with two additional cottages and outbuildings, sitting in approx. 1.58 acres.

Leyburn office 01969 738983

Thame, Oxfordshire — £950,000 Guide price

A glorious Grade II listed former farmhouse with secluded garden and double garage, ideally positioned within a short walk of the historic town centre.

Thame office 01844 447905

Blockley, Gloucestershire — £1,500,000 Guide price

Splendid William and Mary 17th century Grade II* listed orangery, beautifully located on the southern edge of Northwick Park.

Moreton-in-Marsh office 01608 503959

Norton, Evesham, Worcestershire — £1,475,000 Guide price

Ashmore House is a beautiful late Georgian country house from the 16th century with well-presented accommodation and quintessentially English gardens and grounds.

Stratford-upon-Avon 01789 229884

Rackenford, Devon — £680,000 Guide price

A spectacular, contemporary barn conversion occupying a large plot in a convenient location with outstanding countryside views.

Tiverton office 01884 685927

Godmersham, Kent — £949,000 Guide price

Yew Tree House is a charming Grade II listed family home with a wealth of traditional features, an extensive garden and swimming pond.

Canterbury office 01227 319798

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Woodbridge, Suffolk

£1,000,000
Guide price

A distinctive four-bedroom Grade II listed property with parking and a garage, located in the heart of Woodbridge close to the River Deben.

Woodbridge office 01394 807906

Shaw Mills, North Yorkshire

£1,000,000

Known as "The Chapel Of Rock" this stunning and unique home sits within a large plot with storage building and large paved patio ideal for al fresco dining.

Harrogate office 01423 578944

Carsluith, Dumfries and Galloway

£239,000
From

A unique opportunity to purchase a new bespoke cedar holiday lodge on the spectacular Galloway coastline with uninterrupted south facing sea views.

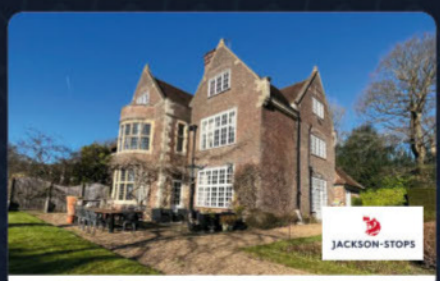
Castle Douglas office 01556 487991

Stowting, Kent

£1,199,000

An extensive equestrian property including converted barn, detached holiday cottage, stable yard, riding arena and 12.15 acres of land.

Ashford office 01233 238793



Westerham, Kent

£1,850,000
Guide price

Elegant country house with generously proportioned accommodation and views, located just a short walk from Westerham town.

Oxted office 01883 596932

Stalling Busk, North Yorkshire

£650,000
Guide price

Raydale Cottage is a beautiful Dales property with unspoilt views and retaining original character and charm, set in a truly exceptional location.

Leyburn office 01969 738985

Erlestoke, Wiltshire

£450,000
Guide price

A charming and quirky Grade II listed house built in 1710, arranged over three floors and sitting in just under an acre of garden.

Devizes office 01380 584955

Burwash, East Sussex

£750,000

A four-bedroom detached family home built around 1920 with far-reaching views and large mature garden, situated on a countryside lane.

Heathfield office 01435 577943

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COUNTRY LIFE
VOL CCXX NO 13, MARCH 29, 2023

Ms Jo Grogan

Jo is studying for a degree in historical wood carving and gilding at City & Guilds of London Art School and is a support teacher for the National Saturday Club, a charity that provides workshop opportunities for teenagers. Last year, she was one of 25 craftspeople to be awarded funding from the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust. Jo is engaged to Stuart Whitton and is the daughter of Ron and Joan Grogan of Liverpool.

Photographed in her workshop at City & Guilds, by Mike Garrard

Contents March 29, 2023

Ever watchful, a brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) pauses from 'running races in her mirth', her soft fur and softer eye momentarily still

Windsor Castle, Berkshire (Paul Highnam/ Country Life Picture Library)

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Danny Green/naturepl.com

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Ripe for revisiting

IN 1913, COUNTRY LIFE acted as the publisher of a new history of Windsor Castle. This was no ordinary book, having been originally commissioned more than 50 years previously by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and then postponed following the latter's death in 1861. The commission was renewed by Edward VII and again by George V, through the figure of W. H. St John Hope, an outstanding scholar and antiquary. He laboured for a further 12 years on the castle, examining the fabric and the documentary evidence relating to it.

The result of all this cumulative research must be a contender for the largest single work ever compiled on a single building by a single author: nearly 650 pages of text, interleaved with engraved and photographic illustrations and divided into two huge and lavish volumes, accompanied by a collection of large-scale plans. Few publishers at the time could have coped with the undertaking and St John Hope was evidently supported in some of the technical complexities of the work by the then Architectural Editor of this magazine, Lawrence Weaver, whom he knew and trusted.

The scale of St John Hope's magnum opus was more than a product of scholarly self-indulgence. Windsor Castle—if all the architectural riches within the circuit of its walls can be meaningfully discussed as a single entity—is a rare example of a building that sustains profound investigation. After all, it has been in existence for the best part of a millennium and its evolution can be understood to reflect the history of the nation at large—not to mention the changing personal tastes of its monarchs—in every period since the Norman Conquest. No less astonishingly, the castle continues actively to contribute to our national life both as a working palace and as a backdrop to major events. It also operates as a notable tourist attraction, welcoming hundreds and thousands of visitors from around the world each year.

COUNTRY LIFE, therefore, is very proud this week to make an exclusive return to Windsor Castle to report on the most recent changes to the State Apartments, with specially commissioned photographs, taken by permission of the late Queen in the last 10 days of her reign, and a new illustration. These images vividly convey the sheer impact of the castle interiors. In this coronation year, the article is a reminder of the ongoing evolution of royal palaces in response to changing needs and circumstances. It also shows that Windsor Castle remains, for its architecture, contents and associations, a supreme example of a place that—to misquote Dr Johnson—is both worth seeing and worth going to see.

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Fit for a king—or you

FOR those who dream of restoring a Scottish castle, but suspect that steep, spiral staircases, small windows in 6ft-thick walls and vertically stacked rooms with turret closets might not be entirely practical for permanent residence, the Landmark Trust has the perfect answer: rent one for a holiday. The conservation charity, which was founded by Sir John Smith in 1965, has 200 unusual buildings in its portfolio, ranging from 15th-century Llwyn Celyn in Monmouthshire and Wyatt's model dairy at Cobham Hall, Kent, to the Gothic Temple at Stowe in Buckinghamshire and the Frank Lloyd Wright-style Anderton House in Devon.

Live like a Scottish king, albeit without the spiders or swords, at Fairburn Tower in the Highlands

Among the gatehouses and prospect towers, ornamental poultry and pig houses, chapels and banqueting pavilions, Scottish castles stand out as particularly popular. The trust's latest triumph, Fairburn Tower in the Highlands, joins Saddell Castle, Old Place of Monreith, Castle of Park and Rosslyn Castle as its fifth Landmark in this category. Newly resplendent in a coat of pink limewash, the slender, pepperpot-turreted shaft is an inspiring example of how a 16th-century fortified dwelling can be sympathetically adapted for modern domestic use.

Fairburn stands above the River Orrin with splendid views to Ben Wyvis and the Black Isle, one of a string of Mackenzie towers that were strategically sited to guard the fertile farmlands of Easter Ross. Built in the 1540s by a courtier of James V, the castle was abandoned in the 18th century and became a roofless shell, sometimes occupied as a byre.

The trust started work here in 2020, since when it has restored Fairburn to its 17th-century form, preserving the fortified ground floor, with its gunloops and rare swivel mount for a gun pintle still in situ, and reinstating the spiral stair. The interior—with only one room on each of four floors—has been furnished to suit the period, combining traditional features with discreet mod cons.

The trust is notable for commissioning traditional craftspeople to make new work for its properties and Fairburn presents two fine examples of this contemporary patronage. The hall has been embellished with a conjecturally decorated ceiling, painted by Paul Mowbray with texts and motifs based on historic precedents, and the textile designer Duncan Tattersall has created a fabric based on the Brahan Seer's prophecy that a cow would give birth in one of the tower's chambers—a foretelling that almost certainly came true. To book, visit www.landmarktrust.org.uk *Mary Miers*

The painterly prime minister

A PAINTING of the gardens at Hever Castle in Kent by Sir Winston Churchill has 'come home', it was announced today. Dating from the 1930s, the painting, titled *View through an Arch at Hever*, depicts the Italian Garden at Hever when it was owned by Churchill's close friends J. J. Astor V and Lady Violet Astor. The painting was recently purchased from Christie's and will be unveiled by Lord and Lady Astor at a celebratory event this evening.

Churchill was a regular visitor to Hever from his nearby home at Chartwell and painted the castle often, with other views of the gardens available to view at his family home. He was a part-time painter, but produced more than 500 pictures and was best known for his landscapes, especially of Kent and abroad.

The painting will tie in with a small exhibition about Hever's role in the Second World War (www.hevercastle.co.uk).

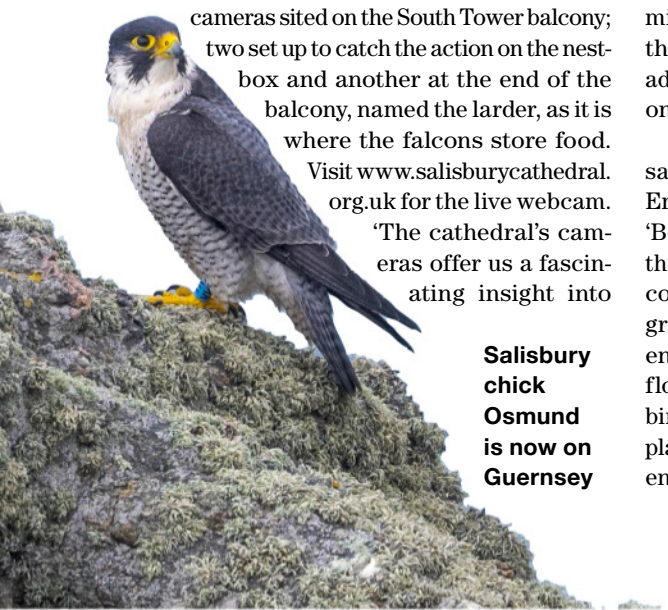
It's snow joke! This image, of the Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club first team, taken by Matthew Lewis, was announced as the winner of the *Wisden* Photograph of the Year Award. The full list of winners and runners-up will be announced on April 18 and the LV= Insurance County Championship will begin on April 6

Peregrines peregrinate to the tower

FRIDAY, March 17, saw the first female peregrine falcon lay her egg in the tower nest at Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire, much to the surprise of those monitoring the nest. 'The peregrines have beaten us to the draw,' says the cathedral, which reports that a further two eggs have been laid, and that the 'Peregrine Cam' is now live.

Peregrine falcons had long nested on Salisbury Cathedral, famous around the world for its 123-metre (403ft) spire, but, due to persecution in the 20th century, were absent between 1953 and 2014. Since that year, chicks have been born and fledged each year apart from 2018, with four chicks fledging last year, bringing the grand total hatched on the tower to more than 20 birds.

The nesting pair can be watched via three cameras sited on the South Tower balcony; two set up to catch the action on the nest-box and another at the end of the balcony, named the larder, as it is where the falcons store food. Visit www.salisburycathedral.org.uk for the live webcam. 'The cathedral's cameras offer us a fascinating insight into the lives of these amazing raptors, and a chance to study their behaviour,' says Granville Pictor from the Wiltshire Ornithological Society and the cathedral's peregrine expert. 'For example, this female probably won't start incubating until she lays her next-to-last egg—they generally lay between three and four—so we'll see the eggs left uncovered for longish periods. She'll know instinctively when to settle down and then we'll get to see everything unfold.'



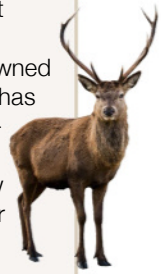
Salisbury chick Osmund is now on Guernsey

The adult peregrines currently nesting on the South Tower have been frequent visitors to the site over winter and staff members at the cathedral caught them engaging in courtship behaviour (such as the male 'bowing' to the female and courting flights up and around the spire) earlier in March. With the eggs laid, visitors might see both birds flying around, but, once the female begins incubating the eggs, the adults will take it in turns to sit on them, so only one bird will be seen in flight at a time.

'It is good to see the peregrines back and laying,' says Phil Sheldrake, senior advisor at Natural England and nature advisor to the cathedral. 'Being able to watch the breeding process like this is a great way of involving people in wildlife conservation and the natural world—and it's great to see that the cathedral is extending its environmental programme to include wildflower planting, a giant bug cathedral, bat and bird boxes and The Queen's Green Canopy trees planted on Marsh Close. Every little bit helps and encourages others to do the same.'

Good week for

Coup deer'tat
Residents of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides have voted against a mass cull of red deer from a 93,000-acre community-owned estate. The decision, which has been welcomed by the Scottish Countryside Alliance, will prompt a discussion on how to control the 1,200 red deer



Wonky walls
A man renovating the kitchen in his 'really wonky' York flat has uncovered a 400-year-old frieze. The 'odd piece of wall' depicts scenes from poet Francis Quarles's 1635 book *Emblems*

King of subscriptions
Anybody who takes out a subscription to COUNTRY LIFE before April 19 will receive the Charles III coronation issue, saving you a bunfight at the newsstands

Coral linings
A British Second World War munitions ship sunk by a German bomber off the coast of Egypt has become a coral reef. The SS *Thistlegorm* is now home to 71 varieties of coral and fish species

Bad week for

Elton Reservoir
Developer Peel L&P wants to build 3,500 new homes near Manchester in an area that attracts rare wildfowl, terns and waders. It has been chosen for its 'strategic benefits'

Meat eating
Oxford City Council has voted to ban all meat and dairy products from its events, to set an example about sustainability, it says. The move has been accused of 'snubbing' the local farming community

Hampshire shark
A rare smalltooth sand tiger shark was found without a head, tail and fin on a Hampshire beach. Scientists wanted to study the 6ft-long carcass and have called for the return of the missing body parts

Failing pheromones
A study finds that ozone pollution is hindering male fruit flies' ability to emit their characteristic scent. The odours are used by female flies to select a mate **AEW**

Fish to the fore

THE perilous state of our freshwater fish is the focus of a new exhibition on Exmoor and a new River Academy in Scotland. The Exmoor exhibition, titled 'Fabulous Fish', is the creation of the artist Jo Minoprio, and will showcase the work of 10 artists whose work will form a 'compelling artistic intervention into the situation under the surface of our UK waterways'.

'Fabulous Fish' will also draw attention to a species in critical decline—wild Atlantic salmon—and the challenges faced by many other species across freshwater and marine environments. Among the works will be *The Decline of Eels* by the artist Julia Manning and members of the Missing Salmon Alliance will also provide support for the exhibition, which runs until April 8 at the Lanacre Barn Gallery, Withypool (www.moorlandart.com).

Salmon are also a focus of the Ian Gregg River Academy, which has opened at Drygrange in the Scottish Borders. The educational resource will aim to teach people from the local area and beyond about the river environment and has been opened by the Tweed Foundation, a charity 'that works to protect and conserve freshwater fish stocks within the Tweed catchment'.

The facility will use live specimens, such as small salmon, trout, grayling, minnows ('baggies') and stone loaches ('beardies'), interactive displays and hands-on activities to teach children, young people and adults about the river and the organisms that live in it. The goal is to increase understanding of the importance of the river system.

The River Academy has been named after the owner of high-street bakers Greggs, with Ian Gregg being a former River Tweed Commission chief commissioner who was instrumental in the formation of the UK's Rivers Trusts movements, the foundation says.

Ian Gregg with Lorna Slater MSP and young fishers Alice Murray and Dexter Dickey

'The Tweed has played a huge part in my life and the work of the River Tweed Commission and the Tweed Foundation has been an inspiration to river catchments throughout the UK,' says Mr Gregg. 'I hope that this new initiative will help to encourage an appreciation of the river and its tributaries and a desire to protect it for the future.' Visits to the Ian Gregg River Academy are free, but must be prebooked by calling the Tweed Foundation on 01896 848271 (www.rivertweed.org.uk).

A bequest fulfilled at last

COVENTRY'S Grade I-listed Charterhouse will open its doors to the public on Saturday (April 1) after a £10 million refurbishment. The building has been closed for the past 10 years, during which time fundraising and restoration has been undertaken by the Historic Coventry Trust; £6 million of the funding has come from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The 14th-century structure began life as a Carthusian monastery founded by Richard II in 1385 and has taken on many different roles, including a garden growing exotic plants and a private house once owned by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The building was bequeathed to the people of Coventry in 1940 by its last resident, Col William Wyley, as a museum and park.

The building will feature three conserved wall paintings 'of national importance', a revitalised garden and a new café and bar run by Michelin-starred chef Glynn Purnell. The site was acquired by the Historic Coventry Trust, which was formed to fulfil the aim of Wyley's vision to open it to the public. The surrounding 'Charterhouse Fields' were acquired from the council and reunited with the main building to be used as part of the Heritage Park, which will also be accessible to the public.

'This is a huge milestone for Historic Coventry Trust as we prepare to open Charterhouse to the public for the first time in more than 630 years,' says Ian Harrabin, founder and chair of the trust. 'It has been a long road of more than a decade since our earliest meetings with the council and local residents to save one of Coventry's most important buildings. What has been achieved with the support of so many is testament to the power of working together.

'Col Wyley's vision for his bequest was for the building to be a centre for Arts and culture, for the benefit of all people,' adds Mr Harrabin, 'and we are confident that the restoration and the activities we have organised will more than do honour to his wishes.' →

Getty; Henry Rowe; Phil Wilkinson; The Historic England Archive; Hugh Clark

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Find a river and look for Ratty

VOLE-NTEERS are being sought by the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) to help take part in a national water-vole survey between April 15 and June 15. The water vole, once a common sight along Britain's inland waterways, is one of the country's fastest-declining mammals, the charity says, with the loss of suitable habitat and the release of American mink in the 1980s being blamed as the cause for their falling numbers.

The survey has been conducted by the PTES since 2015 and the charity says that the data gathered by volunteers will enable conservationists to see where the mammals are living and where they aren't, thus dictating where conservation efforts need to be concentrated. The survey requires volunteers to visit a local waterway and record their findings from one 500-metre stretch online; no previous vole experience is required, with free online training provided and more than 900 pre-selected sites to choose from.

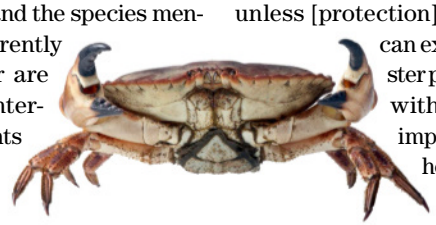
'We're asking volunteers to find their nearest stream, ditch, river or canal, and look out for water voles, listen for their characteristic "plop" as they dive into the water or see the signs they leave behind—from footprints and burrows in the riverbank to feeding signs and droppings,' says Emily Sabin, water-vole officer at PTES. 'Any sightings or signs of American mink should also be recorded.

'Last year, 216 sites were surveyed, with 85 showing signs of water voles. This builds on 2021's data, where 116 sites were surveyed with 47 indicating water-vole presence. We hope even more people take part this year.' Visit www.ptes.org/watervoles to sign up.

Crustacean crisis

DON'T forget our spineless friends, says conservation charity Buglife, which has raised concerns about the declining populations of crabs and lobsters. The charity reports a lack of attention, stewardship and protection given to our crustaceans and has called for improved protection measures and a reduction in fishing effort.

Data from around the UK suggests significant drops in the numbers of brown crabs and European lobsters. At the same time, the arrival of Alaskan king crabs, increases in spiny spider crab and the recovery of the European spiny lobster population are resulting in an upsurge in largely unregulated fishing pressure on these animals. Buglife says the fishing of these species has not been subject to the same scrutiny as the management of finned-fish populations and the species mentioned do not currently have quotas, nor are they subject to international agreements or negotiations.



As well as over-fishing, other causes of crustacean decline are likely to be climate change, non-native species, chemical pollution, oxygen depletion and algal blooms. The charity says new science is required to understand the declines, but also advocates urgent action, including the implementation of population monitoring; regulation; the creation of 'no-take' zones; and the addition of the European spiny lobster to the Wildlife and Countryside Act protected species list.

'The Teesside mass-die off event has drawn attention to UK shellfisheries, but the bigger picture is just as concerning,' says Buglife CEO Matt Shardlow. 'Action is required now... Last year, the Government recognised crabs and lobsters as sentient beings, putting them on a par with finned fish, but unless [protection] is levelled-up we can expect crab and lobster population crashes, with resulting big impacts on ecosystem health and fisheries.'

Country Mouse

Gather ye garlic

IT'S antibiotic, antiseptic, lowers both your blood pressure and cholesterol level and is growing in a woodland near you. Wild garlic is the first great foraging freebie of the year, heralding spring with its drifts of distinctive garlic scent. Its blast of vivid-green chlorophyll transforms the dull woodland floor into a glorious verdant carpet and, most of all, it is delicious.

Yes, you can buy it in some farmers' markets and smart delis, where it costs about £1 per 100g, or you can take out your secateurs and gather £1's worth with every snip. Wild garlic wasn't always fashionable and was regarded as a poor man's onion when I grew up, but, equally, when I was a boy, the only place that you could buy olive oil was in the local chemist. Today, together with some pine nuts and Parmesan, the olive oil and wild garlic can be transformed into the most delicious of pestos. It can also be frozen like spinach.

This bounty will last for a couple of months and disappear at about the time that the bluebells, which often share the same habitat, flower. The wild garlic eventually produces clusters of pretty white flowers, but, in my opinion, the leaves are best to eat when they are young and that time is now. **MH**

Town Mouse

A judgement on uniform

THE dismal weather over the past week has not made it very easy to persuade our house guest—a delightful exchange student from Valencia—that London might be an attractive place to live. We met up at Victoria Station during the tail end of the evening rush hour and, with the aim of introducing some of the sights of the city, took a taxi home. With its lights and crowds, even Victoria Street looked relatively cheerful. It was the St Elizabeth Tower, or Big Ben, however, that elicited the most interest, followed by the big reveal of the whole city from Westminster Bridge. The children tend to take these things for granted, so it's good for them to be reminded that their familiar world and city is foreign and curious to most people. Also, that it is spectacular.

Over recent days, the exchange student has been attending some classes at school and has similarly offered fresh perspectives on that. The monosyllabic overarching description of the whole experience was 'strict' and, although their English did not extend to an analysis of uniforms, disbelief and incomprehension were perfectly expressed by the rolling of the eyes. It was a reminder that language is only one of the ways in which we communicate and that, sometimes, words are completely inadequate to the task. **JG**

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Town & Country Notebook

Edited by Carla Passino

Quiz of the week

1) What's the name for a female seal?

2) In which county is Buxton, one of Britain's highest market towns?

3) Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace was partly based on a glasshouse he had designed for which estate?

4) Who composed the opera *Dido and Aeneas*?

5) Moles belong to which animal family?

Word of the week

Giggish *(adjective)*
Lively, flighty, wanton

100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE
March 31, 1923

THE advantages of using electricity for cooking, so far as concerns cleanness and absence of all dirt and smell, are sufficiently obvious. But [there are] other advantages. The temperature (due to heating of the air in the oven by electric elements) can be kept absolutely constant at the desired value. With its remarkable advantage in certainty, therefore, cooking by the use of electricity becomes a much easier matter. From the point of view of economy, electrical cooking possesses a notable advantage. According to Mrs Beeton, the wastage of a joint cooked by coal fire or gas amounts to a quarter or a third of its weight. Experience with meat cooked in an electric oven shows that wastage is only about half as much. The one operation for which electric appliances are not entirely suitable is the heating of water in quantities necessary to make hot baths at short notice.—*A. B. W. K.*

1) A cow 2) Derbyshire 3) Chatsworth 4) Henry Purcell 5) 'Talpidae'
Riddle me this: The letter 'r'

Paws for thought

Dog trainer Ben Randall offers his advice

Start from scratch

Q Our black lab, who is nearly 12, but fit as a fiddle, is scratching his coir mat frequently and with increased vigour at night. What's the reason for this?—*I. M., Wiltshire*

A Digging and scratching are normal dog behaviours, but when they become excessive, they can be a sign of some underlying problem. 1. Your dog's paws could be sore or itchy and he finds the harsh material of the mat relieves this. Dogs can get their paws and tummies stung by nettles—if so, antihistamines will help, so speak to a vet. 2. Excessive scratching could be a sign that your dog is stressed or, if you don't spend a lot of time with him during the day, a sign of separation anxiety. 3. Your pet has had a recent clean bill of health, but loss of hearing can be a cause of scratching. An ageing dog that's going deaf can find being alone in a dark room terrifying. 4. Once you're sure there's no physical cause for itchy paws, replace the mat with something else—a treat for his alone time, such as an antler or perhaps a hoof that he can chew or scratch in the night. In time, the anxiety should subside.

To pose your own canine conundrum, email paws-for-thought@futurenet.com. For details about Mr Randall and his training app, visit www.gundog.app/trial

Time to buy

Peter Rabbit linen napkin, £14, Avenida Home through Liberty (www.libertylondon.com)

Rabbit dog toy, £17, Barbour (www.barbour.com)

Hand-painted Easter Egg, £22, Daylesford Organic (www.daylesford.com)

'The sun was like a word written between the sea and the sky, a word that was swallowed up by the sea before any man had time to read it'

This is the End, Stella Benson

Riddle me this

What can you see in the middle of March and April that you can't see at the beginning or end of either month?

In the spotlight

Periwinkle *(Vinca minor)* and greater periwinkle *(Vinca major)*

Periwinkles, *Vinca minor*, are making themselves known now, spangling the ground with their small, blue-violet stars. Look closer: the blunt-ended petals frequently have a slightly leaning stance, suggesting rotational movement, echoing the sails on an old-fashioned windmill—a result of the way the flowers open like an unfurling umbrella. As did snowdrops, lesser periwinkles escaped from gardens at some point in the distant past, so that wild colonies have established themselves here and there across the countryside, often decorating hedge banks and copses.

A small-leaved, sprawling evergreen that spreads itself by dropping roots into the earth at regular intervals from its ground-hugging, wiry stem, it gained a reputation for immortality. In medieval England, therefore, people about to be executed sometimes wore it as a crown or garland. Despite toxic properties, it was also prescribed medicinally and 'to staunch bleeding at the nose in Christians if made into a garland and hung about the neck'. The greater periwinkle, *Vinca major*, bears larger flowers. In both kinds, there are variations in colour, from white to shades of blue, dark maroon and deep purple.

Unmissable events

Until December 31, 2026 'Unseen Treasures of The Portland Collection', The Harley Foundation, Welbeck, Nottinghamshire. This exhibition brings together items as diverse as Michelangelo's 'Madonna of Silence' and the pearl earring Charles I wore at his execution in 1649 (www.harleygallery.co.uk)

March 30–April 29 'Wild Garden', The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh. Angie Lewin's delightful watercolours (*pictured*) capture the changing colours of flowers and plants through the seasons (www.angielewin.co.uk)

April 4 and May 2 Wildflower guided walk, Westonbirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire. See the arboretum from a different perspective with these two-hour tours, which unveil the stories and traditions associated with the local flora. Book walks up to seven days in advance (www.forestryengland.uk/westonbirt-the-national-arboretum)

April 7–9 Medieval Festival, Arundel Castle, West Sussex. Re-enactment of the time John I gathered his followers at Arundel, with combat, falconry, archery and period crafts (www.arundelcastle.org)

Book ahead

April 26–30 The Loaningdale Piano Festival, Arts at Loaningdale, Biggar, Lanarkshire. Six international pianists star in this new festival (https://artsatloaningdale.org)

Overbury Court, Overbury, Worcestershire, GL20 2NP. April 1, 11am–4pm
With its sweeping lawns, delightful pools, cascades, natural streams and a more formal rill, as well as venerable plane trees, this 10-acre garden is the perfect place for a spring walk. You can also admire the structure of the formal terraces with yew hedges and deep borders that will flourish into midsummer glory. With views over parkland or to the elegant Georgian house (not open) and picturesque village, it is an idyllic place.

Wines of the week

A good day for Chardonnay
Morrisons, The Best Chardonnay, Coastal Region, South Africa, 2018. £6, Morrisons, alc 13.5%
Unoaked, but aged on lees for up to six months, this has a spiced nose of pineapple and creamy custard tart. Melon and citrus flavours, textured with buttery peach, balanced by mineral acidity. More yellow fruits and grapefruit on the long finish. Excellent value.

Taste *la France*
Domaine Jones, On the QT Bin 31: Dry Muscat, Languedoc, France, 2021. £15.99, Waitrose Cellar, alc 13.5%
A refined and delicious expression of Muscat. The floral aspects add gentle nuances to the lemon, pear and yellow apple fruit. There's a delicious savouriness, given by touches of garrigue, hay and preserved lemon. Good drive, assertive acid and a zesty finish.

No shrinking violet
Domaine Bousquet, Cameleón, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina, 2021. £15.99, Majestic, alc 14%
This new, unoaked Malbec marks the 25th anniversary of the Bousquet family's move from France to Argentina. Black berries, black cherry and violet aromas. High-altitude freshness balances juicy black fruit, with silky tannins and savoury spice.

Sweet dreams are made of this
Nyx, Mavrodaphne of Patras, Peloponnese, Greece, NV. £6.50, Asda, alc 15%
This great-value fortified alternative from the Greek Peloponnese will win fans with its spiced, dried-fruit scents, nutty herbal notes and sweet fig and raisin flavours. Soft and fresh, it's comparatively easy drinking, with only 15% alcohol versus Port's 20%.

For more, visit www.decanter.com
Decanter

Getty: Rebecca Milling/Angie Lewin, *Spitalfields Mug with Tulips*

BOODLES
1798

A FAMILY STORY

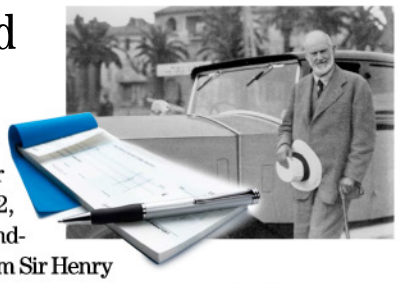
Yasmin and Amber Le Bon wear Raindance

Letters to the Editor

Mark Hedges

Letter of the week

Uncashed cheque



WHEN my father married in 1932, he received a handsome cheque from Sir Henry Royce (*'The real drive of his life', March 15*), who was, at the time, a family friend. For safe-keeping, my father put the cheque in his wallet and there it remained.

Six months later, Sir Henry (*above*) died and the cheque was lost. As a result, my first lesson in finance from my father was: always get cheques to the bank at once. Fortunately, we don't need to worry about cheques any more.

James Allcock, by email

P. S. The executors very kindly honoured the cheque!

The writer of the letter of the week will win a bottle of Pol Roger Brut Réserve Champagne

Memories of the Garter Service

READING in Town & Country (*March 8*) that Terry Pendry has been made a Military Knight at Windsor reminded me of a time when I was invited to the Garter Service (*right*). I joined the stewards and Military Knights in the cloisters and listened as they were given their orders ahead of the ceremony. After the knights formed up, we all tried to leave the cloisters, only to find the door had been locked and we were all locked in—or was that out? 'This sort of thing doesn't happen when I watch royal events on television,' I remarked, only to be told: 'No they don't, but something always happens; last year, the west door wouldn't open after the service and the Queen had to wait in the aisle until they could get it open.'

I have since been back to watch the Garter procession, but stayed firmly outside the chapel, on the lawns.

Dean James, Essex

The Truman Show

I ENJOYED the piece on Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's Battersea Power Station (*'Another brick in the wall', London Life, March 1*)—it rightly acknowledges his foresight and even mentions some of his more modest housing developments. However, Roger White's piece (*'In search of desirable residences', March 1*) seems to be suggesting that Poundbury is a success (highly debatable) mainly because of its aesthetic qualities. Walking around Poundbury leaves one with a sense of misunderstanding and a feeling of being in a two-dimensional film set, whereas Scott's early-20th-century urban developments are human scaled, beautifully detailed and forward thinking.

Tim Masters, by email

Jimmy the Jubilee Dog

I THOUGHT you might be interested to know the story of Jimmy the Jubilee Dog (*left*) and the part he played in the procession to St Paul's Cathedral during George V's Silver Jubilee celebrations in May 1935. At the time, my grandfather, Edwin Bedford, was the Rector of St Andrew's Church, Holborn. Jimmy 'escaped' from the Rectory and entertained the vast crowds by running solo along the route along Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street. Do you think there might be another 'Jimmy' getting ready to join in the fun and run up and down Whitehall and The Mall in 'Coronation style' on May 6?

Hugh Bedford, Dorset

Park and flee

WHAT Simon Jenkins fails to acknowledge (*'A charter for second homes', March 15*) is that many second homes are front-gardenless small cottages. Often-absent owners turn up in 4x4s, which are then parked in side roads as, otherwise, the vehicle would take the light from the sitting room. Where I lived in Norfolk, this meant that the side road became a de facto second-home owners' car park. I lost patience with this state of affairs and moved away, having chosen a buyer for my house who would be living there full time.

Jane Moth, Staffordshire

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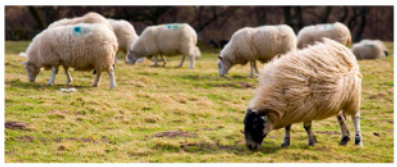
Alamy; Arthur Parkinson



Call from the uplands

I RUN an upland farm in an isolated part of the Northumberland National Park. We have a flock of 500 hefted sheep and 35 native-breed cattle. This year, Defra figures show the average income of an upland farm will be £16,500 (*'Farming on the edge', March 1*).

Many farmers are planning to increase stocking levels to try to make ends meet; however, we can't as our farm is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation and Natural England sets maximum stocking levels. This makes us more reliant upon Government support than most—diversification is challenging due to our isolated position. Public money for public goods makes so much sense. It is a tragedy that the ELMs fail to deliver for upland farmers.
Lucy Porritt, Northumberland

Plea to the quizmaster

I WONDER if any other readers have noticed how much more difficult the Quiz of the Week has been lately. We used to pride ourselves on getting four or five correct answers, but, now, we're getting some of them wrong the second time, too. *Geoff Arnold, Leicestershire*
Quizmaster here: noted, but I'll reveal a secret. Questions often reference previous articles—don't tell the Editor!

COUNTRY LIFE
APRIL 5

It's the Easter issue, with Arthur Parkinson's guide to which chickens make the best egg-layers, the Editor's Easter quiz, London's green lungs, hot cross buns and beautiful bluebells

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Fiddling while Britain burns

WE'RE going to be warned by mobile phone if we're likely to be flooded or threatened by storms or, eventually, terrorism. The Government has done a deal with the mobile-phone operators that will cover 90% of the country. It means that, if a serious incident is likely, then an area ranging from the size of a local electoral ward to the whole of the UK can be alerted. You'll know that trouble's brewing by 10 seconds of a siren-like blast followed by a pictorial warning, which will stay in view until you turn it off.

With the likelihood of more extreme weather, this is an innovation that will be particularly welcome for those living on the sea coast or in rural areas. They have often been difficult to reach by more conventional methods and this proposal fills a major gap in our national security system. The US, the Netherlands and Japan have got it already and, as it only works one way, Big Brother can't be watching you.

> 'Its aims are excellent; its delivery pathetic. What's missing is action'

Trouble is, it all begs the question. Here is Oliver Dowden in the Cabinet Office telling us all that the new warnings will be used to highlight the increasing danger from floods, storms and heatwaves, but there's little sign of his colleagues in Defra doing what's needed to prepare for those conditions. Nor do ministers in the new Energy Security and Net Zero Department give any impression of urgency in implementing the industrial and commercial changes necessary to protect us all. Last week, the United Nations high-level scientific report issued a final warning about climate change. Either we speed up our action or the world will be subject to unparalleled rises in temperature and sea levels, which will overwhelm us. The UK Government knows this and rightly has set itself the toughest targets in the world to counter global heating. Its aims are excellent; its delivery pathetic.

Mr Dowden himself has form. When he was chairman of the Conservative Party, he found it politically convenient to play down the importance of urgent action. 'A bit less net-zero dogma,' was his phrase. Good short-term politics, perhaps, but it characterises the Government's approach to delivery: put off the hard, game-changing decisions and justify inaction by calling it 'pragmatism'. That's why politicians are in court to explain why there's no effective delivery plan to meet the statutory targets they got Parliament to pass into law.

Country people will be pleased that they will now receive adequate warning of likely disaster, but that only highlights the need for guaranteeing the security of our electricity supply, a policy for home food production, the funding of repair to damaged flood defences and adequate resources for the emergency work of the Environment Agency. Warning us of danger is not sufficient when the Government still hasn't insisted on the necessary infrastructure investment to protect us. Where's the programme to help people use less energy in heating their homes? Where are promised regulations to ensure that newly built houses and flats are fit for the future? Where is Defra's programme to prepare the countryside for climate change?

Wherever we look, there are the best of intentions, the clearest of targets and, now, the most effective of warning systems. What's missing is action. In January, former Conservative minister Chris Skidmore told the Government this in the report it commissioned. The Climate Change Committee has constantly stated it. Now, the world's greatest scientists have given us a last warning. Unless we see urgent action to back up the promises, Mr Dowden's new alarm system must carry an additional message: 'The Government's sorry you will be flooded, but we left it too late to do anything about it.'

Athena
Cultural Crusader

A crisis in professional singing

PROFESSIONAL singers have had an exceptionally tough time of late. They have shared with other musicians the problems of performing in Europe post-Brexit and endured the longest pandemic suspension of almost any group (thanks to the physical nature of singing). Then came the scandalous and inept cuts inflicted by Arts Council England on opera. The recent announcement that the BBC Singers would be axed on the eve of their centenary celebrations felt to many like another body blow. This makes the stay of execution, which was announced last Friday, very welcome. Even so, Athena can't help but meditate on the scandal of what has happened and the damage done.

Why the BBC, which maintains five orchestras and one body of professional singers, tried to axe the latter is mysterious. True, those orchestras are themselves undergoing cuts, but the approach simply seemed wrong-headed. Nor was the announcement well handled. Particularly egregious was the BBC's endeavour to spin a cost-cutting measure as an opportunity. If bad news can't be discussed honestly, how can it be dealt with effectively? Added to which, if the accusations circulating in leaked correspondence from the co-directors of the BBC Singers are true, it would seem that the cuts were made in a poisonous professional environment and without a clear sense of what they would achieve in financial terms.

> 'Most egregious has been the BBC's endeavour to spin a cost-cutting measure as an opportunity'

The BBC's concurrent attempt to recruit an amateur choir for the coronation concert, meanwhile, unhelpfully threatened to widen the dispute. This, incidentally, may indicate how the BBC hopes to organise its choral patronage in the future, using amateur—and free—talent as much as possible.

It's true that everybody can sing and that the standard of amateur singing can be very high. As anyone who has sung in a choral society will know, however, an amateur performance requires many weeks of preparation. It also demands those involved absorb some—but not all—of the costs. By contrast, a professional choir ought to be able to deliver a good concert on the back of a day's salary. That makes comparing relative costs of the two kinds of performance very difficult. Whether, in the long term, the amateur model could save the BBC money, therefore, is questionable.

Whatever the case, the message sent by what has happened is dismal. The UK has an exceptional spread of at least 20 professional chamber groups and choirs (the latter larger than eight, meaning more than two voices to a part), as well as an outstanding cathedral and collegiate tradition of music, but the pressures on this musical world and the symbioses that maintain it are increasing all the time. Viewed in this context, the proposal to take an axe to the BBC Singers was irresponsible. We cannot afford to loosen another prop in the whole edifice of professional singing in the UK when it is still struggling for survival.

The way we were Photographs from the COUNTRY LIFE archive

1957 Published September 19

A bench offers the perfect springtime prospect over Hagley Hall, Worcestershire, built in 1754–60, and its spectacular landscape setting. The park, which was developed from 1743 by George, 1st Baron Lyttelton, with temples, buildings and monuments, has long been celebrated for its views and variety.

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My favourite painting Oliver Gerrish

Italian Hilltop Farm by Edgar Wood

***Italian Hilltop Farm*, 1921, oil on canvas, 11½in by 13½in, by Edgar Wood (1860–1935), Manchester Art Gallery**

Oliver Gerrish is an architectural historian, bespoke country-house tour operator and building consultant. In 2016, he co-founded Historic Decoration

'Edgar Wood is one of my favourite architects. He had always wanted to be an artist, but his cotton-magnate father did not think it suitable as a career. After his father's death in 1909, Wood devoted much more of his life to art. Only a year before, he had created perhaps his most remarkable house, Upmead, Stafford (*November 18, 2017*), for my grandfather's aunt and uncle. This painting shows the Ligurian city of Imperia viewed from a spot close to Wood's last house on Monte Calvario. He started his life beneath the smoke billowing from Manchester's chimneys, built some of the most remarkable domestic architecture before the First World War and died after a day of walking in the sun-soaked hills of the Italian Riviera. I love the light and warmth of this painting by a man whose whole life was one of interesting contrasts'

Charlotte Mullins comments on *Italian Hilltop Farm*

EDGAR WOOD sketched the countryside near his Middleton home in Greater Manchester with his friend Frederick Jackson when still at school. Jackson became an artist, but Wood trained as an architect, becoming one of the leading avant-garde practitioners of his generation. He was influenced by the writings of William Morris and created Arts-and-Crafts houses that were filled with bespoke pieces of furniture, stained glass and metalwork. Wood subsequently championed several new architectural styles, including Art Nouveau and Art Deco, although few prospective clients were brave enough to commission his cutting-edge designs.

Although Wood collaborated on murals for his houses with Jackson, his work as an architect—creating houses largely for friends and family—kept him away from his brushes. He worked with one assistant only and eschewed factory-produced furnishings. But, in 1922, he retired from architecture and moved to Italy, where he lived until his death in 1935. This painting dates from 1921 and you can't help but feel his heart has already been captured by Italy. A town climbs the slopes of the hill opposite the farm where he was painting. The buildings are bathed in lemony sunlight, a pale-blue sky stretching overhead. The farm's shrubs and bushes form a vigorous Impressionist foreground and his easy style conjures the scene with great warmth.

This painting now hangs in Manchester Art Gallery, five miles from Middleton and close to several of Wood's iconic buildings, such as the First Church of Christ Scientist, which dates from 1903.

Manchester Art Gallery/Bridgeman Images

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Regal splendour and renewal

Windsor Castle, Berkshire

An official residence of His Majesty King Charles III

As the new reign begins, **John Martin Robinson** takes an exclusive look at the recently completed representation of the State Apartments at Windsor Castle

Photographs by Paul Highnam

Fig 1 preceding pages: **A view of Windsor Castle, residence of the Sovereign, from the nearly three-mile Long Walk that was laid out by Charles II in 1680–85.** *Fig 2 above:* **The Upper Ward has been repeatedly remodelled. Here, Edward III's Rose Tower (*centre*) remains as architectural testimony to the depth of the castle's history**

THE State Apartments in the Upper Ward at Windsor Castle occupy the shell of a palace constructed in the 14th century by Edward III. These interiors have been repeatedly reworked on the most opulent scale by a succession of monarchs (***Fig 2***), with particularly notable changes undertaken by the architect Hugh May for Charles II in the 1670s; by James Wyatt for George III in the 1790s; by Jeffry Wyatville for George IV from 1824 and by Anthony Salvin for Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. More recently, the disastrous fire in November 1992 prompted a massive programme of rebuilding and restoration. It was in the course of these works that the then director of the Royal Collection from 1996 to 2010, Sir Hugh Roberts, first conceived the idea for upgrading the surviving historic State Apartments in the building with a view to enhancing their appearance and modernising visitor facilities.

> 'To the south is a glimpse of one of the grandest historic landscapes in England'

This Future Programme of improvements —as this project came to be described—was formally announced in April 2016. Sir Jonathan Marsden, who succeeded as director in 2010, organised special sessions with heritage professionals to discuss the proposals and develop them. They were planned in tandem with a similar programme at Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh. Work at both palaces started in 2017, shortly before Tim Knox took over as director of the Royal Collection in March 2018. They then proceeded under his direction until their completion in mid 2020, amid the covid lockdowns. The project has been almost entirely self-funded by the Royal Collection Trust (RCT), on which the pandemic had a dramatic financial impact.

The architects for the Windsor scheme, which involved delicate archaeological consideration of such an important and complex historic site, were Purcell and the lead appointed to supervise it was Moira Gemmill, former director of design at the V&A Museum. Tragically, she was killed in a bicycling accident just before the project was launched. Tot Brill, who succeeded her, also died unexpectedly, in 2019, and the scheme was seen to completion by Alex Attelsey of the Royal Household Property Section. A Future Programme Project Board, chaired by former RCT trustee Peter Troughton, monitored progress and made many helpful suggestions.

All the work was approved by the late Queen and the then Prince of Wales, now The King, who was responsible for retaining the interior designer Piers von Westenholz as an adviser. The Baron von Westenholz contributed many important suggestions for the finishes and presentation of the rooms, assisted by Simon Hurst, a young architect trained in The Prince's School of Architecture. Their —and The King's—concern for historical detail and artist's eye for colour, tone and texture have enhanced immeasurably the refurbished rooms and the recent works make the State Apartments fully accessible.

The visitor entrance to the State Apartments used to lead from the North Terrace through an incoherent sequence of constricted spaces to one side of the Grand Stairs. Today, the same entrance opens instead into the

Fig 3: **The Inner Hall, a spectacular late-Georgian interior with plasterwork by Francis Bernasconi. The recent works have reopened this magnificent vista through the building and created a space in which Garter processions can be marshalled**

reconstituted Inner Hall, which has been put back as far as possible to the original Wyatt design and enhanced by dramatic lighting and new Gothic lanterns. This is a spectacular late-Georgian interior, with stucco lierne vaults studded with foliate bosses and Gothic columns moulded by Francis Bernasconi, which was enlarged by Wyatville for George IV. It now creates a breathtaking north-south vista through the lower floor of the castle's range ***(Fig 3)***, a view that had been blocked since 1866 by the erection of a masonry wall.

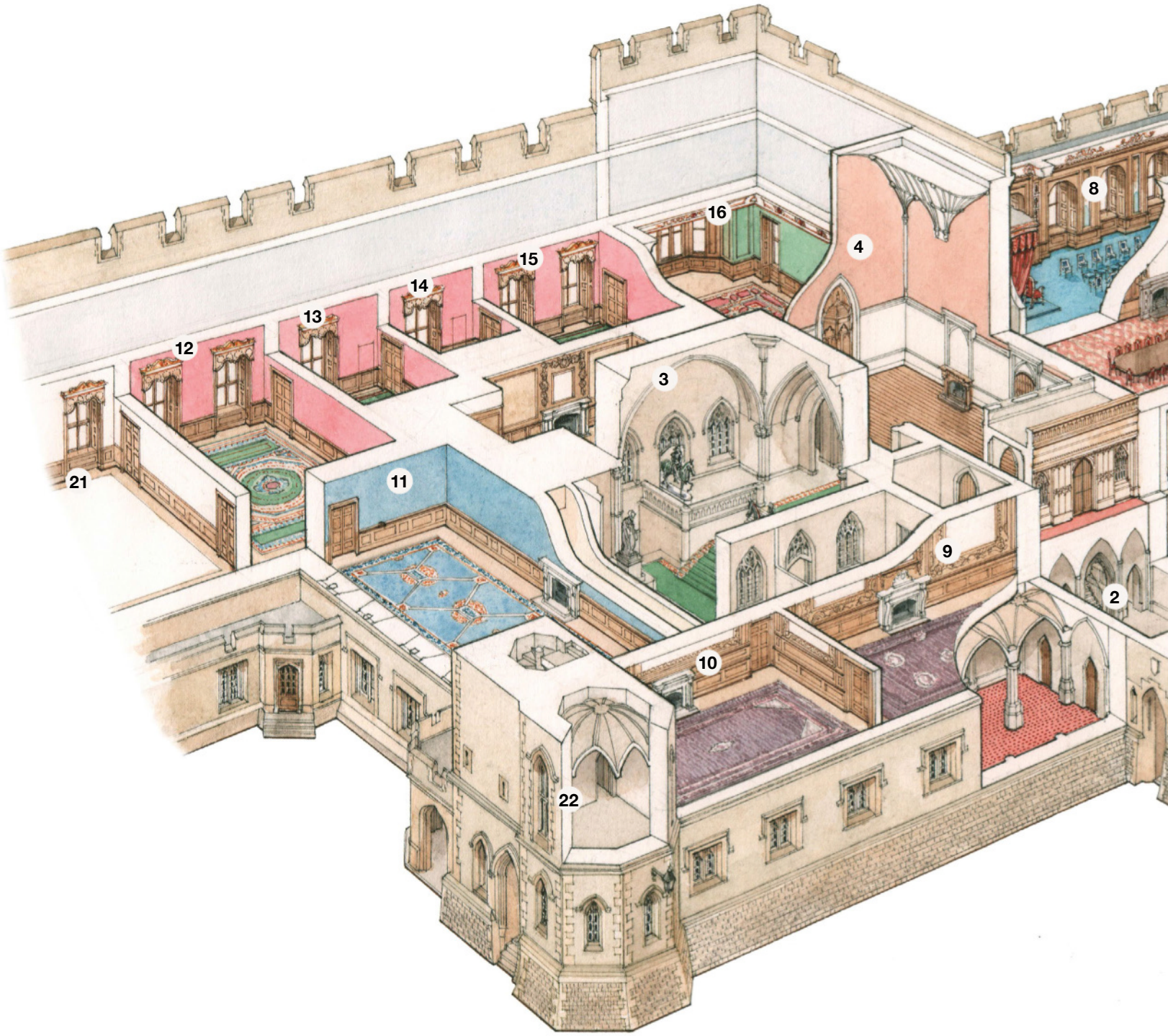
The vista in both directions is splendid. To the north, there is a view over the North Terrace far into Buckinghamshire, across Eton College. To the south is a glimpse of one of the grandest historic landscapes in England, through the State Entrance, Upper Ward and George IV Gate, down Charles II's Long Walk, terminating nearly three miles away in the silhouette of Sir Francis Chantrey's bronze monument to George III high on a craggy, granite plinth ***(Fig 5)***. Long referred to as the 'Copper Horse', an unfortunate guest was rebuked for such a solecism by Queen Victoria, who asked: 'Do you mean the equestrian statue of Our Grandfather?'

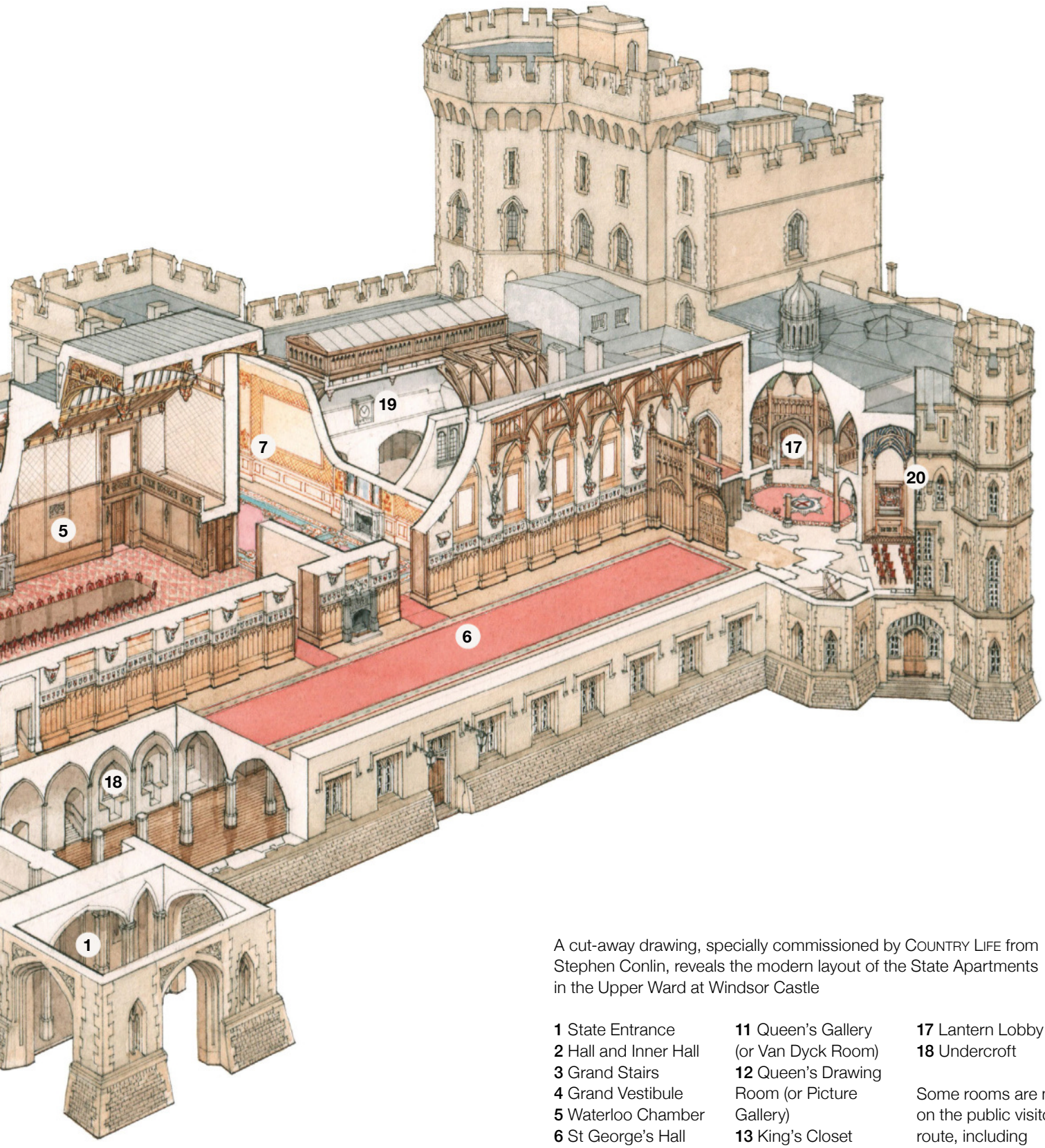
From the Inner Hall, the visitor can now progress to the State Entrance—open to the public for the first time—and onto the →

Inside the castle

News of the Black Prince's victory at Poitiers and the capture of the French King, John II, on September 19, 1356, prompted Edward III to embark on the construction of a vast new palace in the Upper Ward of Windsor Castle. It was laid out around three courtyards set behind a massive frontage that comprised the three principal interiors of the palace—the King's Chapel, hall and chamber—set end to end. It is within the shell of this building, and behind its great façade, that the present royal apartments have developed ever since.

Particularly important have been the changes undertaken for Charles II in the 1670s; George III in the 1790s; George IV from 1824; Prince Albert and Queen Victoria in the 1850s; and Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh after the fire of 1992. Edward III had been engaged in building works in the castle since his Arthurian celebrations there in 1346, from which emerged the royal chivalric brotherhood of the Order of the Garter. With the chapel of the Order, dedicated to St George, in the Lower Ward of the castle, this vast residence in the Upper Ward and the amenity of the surrounding parkland, Windsor henceforth became the unquestioned principal seat of the Kings and Queens of England





A cut-away drawing, specially commissioned by COUNTRY LIFE from Stephen Conlin, reveals the modern layout of the State Apartments in the Upper Ward at Windsor Castle

1 State Entrance
2 Hall and Inner Hall
3 Grand Stairs
4 Grand Vestibule
5 Waterloo Chamber
6 St George's Hall
7 Grand Reception Room
8 Garter Throne Room
9 Queen's Presence Chamber
10 Queen's Audience Chamber
11 Queen's Gallery (or Van Dyck Room)
12 Queen's Drawing Room (or Picture Gallery)
13 King's Closet
14 King's Dressing Room
15 King's Bedchamber
16 King's Drawing Room (or Rubens Room)
17 Lantern Lobby
18 Undercroft

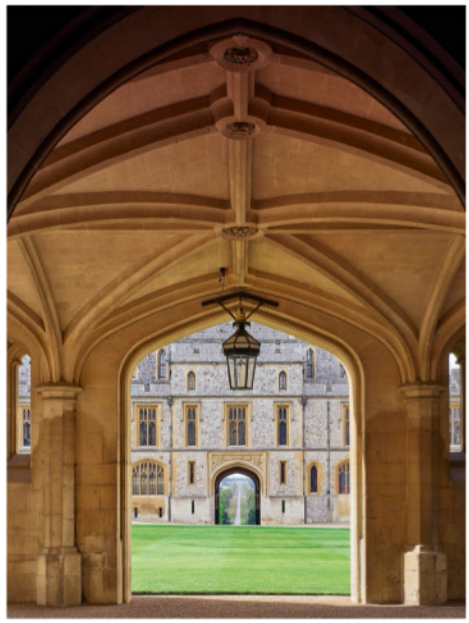
Some rooms are not on the public visitor route, including
19 Great Kitchen
20 Private Chapel
21 Royal Library
22 The 14th-century private stair to the Royal Chambers, in the Rose Tower →

Fig 6 above: **Edward III's vaulted undercroft now incorporates a café, complete with specially commissioned seating and tables in a Gothic idiom.** *Fig 7 facing page:* **The Grand Staircase, with its restored lantern and new carpet in green**

Grand Stairs. In both areas, the armour displays have been cleaned and rearranged ***(Fig 4)***. In the former, there are trophies of serried arms on the walls above and glazed Gothic oak cases below to show the finest armours. Particularly notable are the productions of the Tudor workshops at Greenwich and the tiny damascened suits made for Prince Henry, the elder brother of Charles I, who died young. Some of the cases are Victorian and some newly made to match.

The tall timber lantern and hanging glass chandelier over Salvin's magnificent Grand Staircase ***(Fig 7)*** have both been repaired by the Royal Household's Property Section, with a new central boss, carved with an ER-II monogram. Immediately striking is the new stair carpet devised by the Baron von Westenholz and Mr Hurst. The ubiquitous royal crimson has been replaced with dark green, the Windsor estate livery colour, patterned with heraldic crosses pattées. It extends from the stairs through the Grand Vestibule to the Guard Chamber, on the *piano nobile*. A new carpet has also been made for the Grand Reception Room, copying one designed by Prince Albert, replicated from an old photograph ***(Fig 8)***.

Fig 4 above: **The Hall of the State Entrance hung with the re-arranged and cleaned displays of arms.** *Fig 5 below:* **The view from the *porte cochère* of the State Entrance across the Upper Ward of the castle, with the Long Walk visible beyond**



In the Grand Vestibule at the head of the stairs, the Gothic cabinets installed for the display of gifts presented to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee have been redisplayed, with an astonishing array of artefacts from all over the world. Each case is devoted to a separate continent and the objects range from trophies obtained by force of arms at Seringapatam to a scarf given to Elizabeth II by Nelson Mandela. These displays replace a rather incoherent jumble of Imperial relics and weaponry; visitors greatly enjoy spotting things from their own countries of origin.

The main focus of the redecoration, however, has been in the Charles II State Rooms, which were originally designed by the gentleman-architect Hugh May, a protégé of Wren, in 1675–78, partly within the shell of Edward III's medieval palace and partly in a large new rectangular block facing north called the Star Building. May employed the Italian artist Antonio Verrio to paint the ceilings with mythologies, the Order of the Garter and naturalistic *trompe-l'oeil* decoration. The carver Grinling Gibbons also owed his first significant commission to May at Windsor and, together, they created here the unique English formula for the Baroque interior with Italian painted ceilings and Anglo-Dutch carved wainscot of astonishing virtuosity. The Windsor interiors formed the model for the noble state rooms at →

Royal Collection Trust/©His Majesty King Charles III 2023; Alamy

Fig 8 preceding pages: **The expanse of the Grand Reception Room has been laid with a new Axminster carpet based on one designed by Prince Albert and replicated from an old photograph.** *Fig 9 above:* **The King's Drawing Room or Rubens Room, hung by the Prince with paintings by the eponymous artist. The carpet is new.** *Fig 10 facing page:* **The Louis Quatorze decoration created for George IV incorporates French *boiserie* acquired in Paris from the dealer Delahante by the King's artistic advisor, Lord Farnborough in 1825**

Chatsworth in Derbyshire, Burghley in Lincolnshire, Boughton in Northamptonshire and Petworth in West Sussex.

The layout at Windsor represented in its most extended form the apartments necessary for Court life and royal ceremonial. As was the norm in English and French royal palaces—at least since the 13th century (and first unambiguously documented in the reign of Henry III)—there were separate apartments for the King and Queen. Both assumed a common layout, which was, in practice, defined by those of the King. These were organised in order to regulate and formalise contact with the Sovereign, with rooms opening off each other in strict sequence. By this arrangement, it was possible to withdraw from relatively public outer rooms into more retired—and private—spaces. Over time, the number of rooms gradually multiplied.

By the 16th century, the King's apartment comprised a Guard Room for the Yeoman of the Guard, the Presence Chamber for 'Lords, Knights, Gentlemen and officers of the King's House', the Privy Chamber or Audience Chamber for those invited by the King, the Bedchamber where only the King's inner household servants were permitted, followed by the King's private rooms, the dressing room and closet. Eventually, the Privy Chamber became an assembly room for the Court. Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria, therefore, inserted a more select drawing room between it and the bedroom. This was the plan followed by Charles II at Windsor and, in due course, by Queen Mary and William III in Wren's state rooms at Hampton Court, which overtook Windsor as the principal country palace of the English Crown up to the death of George II.

> 'The layout at Windsor represented in its most extended form the apartments necessary for Court life'

The early Hanoverians avoided Windsor, which was regarded by them as a monument to the Stuarts, and the State Rooms remained undisturbed until George III moved back into the castle in the 1790s. His return reflected a revival of interest in the English constitutional tradition in reaction to the French Revolution. George III revived the State Apartments for Garter ceremonies and formal royal festivities, with an admirably conservative architectural approach. He retained the Verrio ceilings, oak dados and carved acanthus-leaf cornices, but replaced the dark wainscot on the walls with rich hangings of Garter blue velvet, red silk damask and floral needlework borders, as a background for paintings from the Royal Collection, including new commissions from Benjamin West. The striking results are recorded in the aquatints *Pyne's Royal Residences* (1819), for which the original watercolours survive in the Royal Library at Windsor. →

George IV, with his architect Wyatville, concentrated on creating new semi-state and private apartments in the south and east ranges of the Upper Ward and reconstructing St George's Hall, in tandem with the heroic reconstruction of the palace exterior as a dream Gothic castle between 1824 and 1830 at a cost of more than £1 million (***Fig 1***). The renovation of the State Rooms only took place after the King's death in 1830 and to a tighter budget than the government had been able to inflict on that profligate monarch, but still using the competent Wyatville as architect (whereas Nash was sacked at Buckingham Palace). Sadly, all but three of Verrio's ceilings, which it was doubtfully claimed were structurally unsound, were replaced with heavy white and gold stucco designs. These sport fleshy naturalistic scrollwork, Stuart and Hanoverian heraldry, Garter insignia and the monograms of William IV and Queen Adelaide, all the work of Francis Bernasconi, the leading Wyatt stuccadore with an almost industrial production line.

> 'George IV reconstructed the palace exterior as a dream Gothic castle'

These were essentially cosmetic changes, however, and the layout and character of the rooms substantially survived. An exception was the Queen's Bedchamber, which was transformed into the new Royal Library, installed at Windsor by William IV. George IV also truncated the King's apartment by converting the King's Guard Chamber into the Grand Reception Room—detailed in dazzling French Rococo style (***Fig 10***)—and the Privy and Presence Chambers to the Garter Throne and Ante Rooms.

Under Queen Victoria, the State Rooms were used for royal visits, notably that of Napoleon III in 1855, when George IV's magnificent gilt bed by Georges Jacob was rehung in Napoleonic green and purple and placed in the King's Bedchamber. The principal input was Prince Albert's, who repurposed the rooms for the display of paintings collected by the Stuarts, Frederick Prince of Wales, George III and George IV. Assisted by Richard Redgrave, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, the paintings by Rubens were concentrated in the King's Drawing Room, the van Dycks in the Queen's Gallery and the earlier →

Fig 11: **The King's Closet, now a cabinet of Northern European Old Master paintings and hung with richly coloured silk**

HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE

paintings, notably the Holbeins, in the Queen's Drawing Room (***Fig 12***). To reflect this, the rooms were respectively renamed the Rubens Room, Van Dyck Room and Picture Gallery.

The hang reflected the Prince's pioneering art-historical scholarship and his and the Queen's interest in the educational possibilities of art, allowing access to the collections and lending to public exhibitions. The Carolean State Apartments were happily untouched by the 1992 fire and were relatively unaltered in the 20th century, apart from some characteristically judicious improvements by Queen Mary who, for instance, restored the 17th-century oak wainscot in the Garter Throne Room and King's Dining Room in the 1920s and rearranged the furniture.

> 'The picture hang reflected Prince Albert's pioneering art-historical scholarship and interest in the educational possibilities of art'

The recent work respects the many historic layers of these rooms and has involved Royal Collection curators enhancing and extending the picture hangs in the spirit of the Prince Consort, as well as commissioning a series of magnificent new carpets. These latter were designed for the individual rooms by Mr Hurst, with advice from Mr von Westenholz, and their weaving organised by Brinton Carpets in Kidderminster. These carpets take their cue from Wyatville and Bernasconi's ceilings, with geometrical patterns enriched with fasces and similar classical details or floral swags and scrolls.

In the Queen's Presence Chamber and Audience Chamber—which retain their Verrio ceilings celebrating the apotheosis of Catherine of Braganza—the new carpets have a diaper pattern and borders derived from those in the Gobelins 'History of Esther' tapestries on the walls.

In the Queen's Gallery (the Van Dyck Room) the new carpet echoes Wyatville's geometrical ceiling design in blue and silver to go with the blue damask on the walls and the Charles II silver furniture (***Fig 13***). The array of van Dyck portraits has been immeasurably enhanced by bringing the two huge →

Fig 12: **The Queen's Drawing Room. The new carpet repeats the ceiling pattern in very rich colours and the hang of Tudor and Stuart portraits has been augmented**

Fig 13: **The Queen's Gallery—or Van Dyck Room—with a new carpet echoing the ceiling. There is silver furniture from Charles II's reign to the right. Van Dyck's *The Great Peece* and *The King on Horseback with M. de St. Antoine* face each other from each end**

portraits of Charles I—*The Great Peece* and *The King on Horseback with M. de St. Antoine* from Buckingham Palace, which are now hung on the end walls, repeating the original intention in the Gallery at Whitehall Palace. In the Queen's Drawing Room, the new carpet repeats the ceiling pattern in very rich colours, countering the slightly anaemic white and gold of the plasterwork above. The old hang of Tudor and Stuart portraits here is augmented by a new acquisition, a portrait by Gerrit van Honthorst of the Electress Sophia—the 'missing link' between the Stuarts and the Hanoverians—bought in 2018.

The 'Three Kings'—the King's Closet, the King's Dressing Room and the King's Bedchamber—all crimson damask hung, have been further unified by a continuous drugget designed by Mr Hurst in a splendid combination of purple, green and gold. A new picture hang in these rooms continues and respects

the thematic hangs originally conceived by Prince Albert, all set off against rich crimson damask. The King's Closet is now a 'cabinet' of Northern European Old Masters, including works by Breughel, Holbein and Cranach, as well as early portraits of English monarchs ***(Fig 11)***. The King's Dressing Room is now shown as a complementary 'cabinet' of Italian Old Masters, with masterpieces by Bellini, Bronzino and Carracci, representative of classic English connoisseurship ***(Fig 14)***. In the King's Bedchamber, the picture hang is still in progress, but it will eventually evoke Charles I's collection, the foundation nucleus of the Royal Collection, in a dense, tiered hang.

Fig 14: **The King's Dressing Room, a complementary cabinet of Italian Old Masters**

In the King's Drawing Room ***(Fig 9)***, the Rubens canvases in carved frames made for Frederick, Prince of Wales hang in their historic position, complemented by the most splendid of Mr Hurst's carpets. This replaces a faded Persian rug and transforms the room. These changes have been accompanied by the rethinking of visitor movement through the interiors, allowing for the removal of unnecessary druggets and a reduction of ropes and stanchions. New lavatories and disabled access were also planned, as the rooms are used for royal ceremonial throughout the year, as well as tourism. The attention to detail here extends to the crenellated oak cubicles and fossil marble basin surrounds.

The Undercroft Café ***(Fig 6)*** is another major addition to the visitor facilities. Although Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire and Longleat in Wiltshire had led the way in providing such visitor amenities as long ago as the 1950s, there had been no comparable provision for refreshments at Windsor. Now, the opportunity has been taken to convert Edward III's spectacular vaulted wine cellar—the undercroft of St George's Hall—into a café. The shell of the space was stripped after water damage in the 1992 fire, leaving the varied colours and ancient battered surface of the stonework. The Baron von Westenholz advised on this informed authentic approach. The medieval floor level was restored by the painstaking removal of a deep raft of in-filling concrete. The new oak furniture in the Undercroft Café is all in the Gothic style, of course, and was made in the workshops of Character Joinery in Kilmarnock, which has worked on The King's Dumfries House estate in Ayrshire.

The Future Programme has also included changes to the visitor facilities at the tourist entrance in St Alban's Street to the south of the castle. There, the welcome area in the former Lord Chamberlain's workshops has been tactfully expanded and enhanced, using the stock brick characteristic of the utilitarian buildings of the Office of Works. An access ramp has been provided to relieve queueing on the street and a separate entrance contrived for schoolchildren, who will use the Learning Centre established in next-door Pug Yard (called after the mortar-process, not the dog), built and equipped with generous grants from the Clore Duffield and Wolfson Foundations. As well as schoolchildren, the Learning Centre is used by wider community groups and its interior has been amusingly furnished with props salvaged from the 2012 Diamond Jubilee Barge, including Royal Arms, jolly heraldic animals and giant thrones.

As re-presented to the public, the interiors of Windsor Castle at the beginning of the new reign have a renewed magnificence and architectural coherence. They are also better served in a practical sense than ever before. The greatest and most historic of English royal palaces can now be enjoyed even more as one of the finest surviving ensembles of its type in the world and a place of which the British nation can be rightly proud.

For further information, visit www.rct.uk

Native breeds Silver Appleyard

Did you know?

The breed standard is from a 1947 black-and-white painting of a duck and drake by animal artist Ernest Wippell, who worked from carcases sent in the post

THIS elegant, heavy duck breed was created by the renowned waterfowl and poultry breeder Reginald Appleyard in the 1930s at his Ixworth farm in Suffolk, by crossing Rouen, Pekin and Aylesbury ducks. His aim was for 'beauty, size, lots of big white eggs and deep, long, wide breasts'—the perfect duck, in fact (Appleyard was also responsible for developing the prolific white Ixworth chicken).

However, although a popular exhibition fowl thanks to its good looks—the drake has a green head and silver eyebrows and throat—the breed was not standardised until 1982. That confirmation was largely thanks to the broadcaster and journalist Tom Bartlett, who, in addition, created the Miniature Silver Appleyard—about one-third of the size of the original—which was standardised in 1997. Bartlett at one stage kept probably the largest collection of waterfowl in Europe, with some 160 breeds, at his Folly Farm near Burford in Gloucestershire.

Appleyard also created a bantam-sized version by crossing Khaki Campbell ducks with Call drakes; the result, which has a different genetic make-up, is now called the Silver Bantam. He succeeded in his aim: his duck is not merely a pretty face, but is also a useful table bird and a reliable layer. *KG*

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John Lewis-Stempel

Breaking fresh ground

As he toils behind his rotavator on a March morning, **John Lewis-Stempel** breathes in the heady scent of turned soil and is cheered by the repetitive call of the chiffchaff that heralds the arrival of spring

Illustration by Michael Frith

ONLY a man rotavating. To the front of the machine, through the cobwebby mist, the bare ground around the troughs and racks where the sheep stood eating in the bleak days on the hill; behind the spinning steel blades churned earth, for re-sowing. One view is winter, one is spring. The rotavator hits a subterranean rock, pitches and rolls; the operator, although gripping the ox-horn handlebars tight, stumbles among the waves of red earth. A drunken sailor. The engine whines as it works; it is as deafening as conches. Yet, if the rotavator is modern, the tilling of soil is ancient, dating back to time almost beyond measure, when fur-clad humans scraped at the ground with a deer horn. The means change, the practice remains the same.

Gradually, in the warming of the morning, the air in the field top rises, overflowing with scent: the scent of freshly turned dirt. Among the nasal notes of musty wardrobe and rusted iron comes something like baker's yeast or a baby's head. The smell of birth. The cruel, curved blades of the rotavator bisect a long pink earthworm, whose ends coil and circle in an ironic flesh imitation of those blades. 'The cut worm forgives the plough,' wrote William Blake in *Proverbs of Hell* and the operator hopes that this is so. However, only the head end of the severed worm will live to tell the tale—the tail end will die, to add to the soil, which is made from demise and decay, from all the bodies and the bones of the plants and the animals since The Beginning. Yet, from the morbid soil comes new life, a sort of resurrection. This pleasant thought, of how green the hill top will become when sown with fescue, timothy, bird's foot trefoil, ryegrass, sheep's burnet, smooth-stalked meadow-grass, sainfoin and red clover, spurs the rotovating man on. Nonetheless, despite his pleasure in the morning, he is dimly aware that science has more to it than this vision of a green-topped hill in a faraway place or even the satisfaction of toil. There is something in the soil, unseen, microscopic, albeit with the power to alter the mind. A particular soil bacterium, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, which activates the brain cells that produce the feel-good chemical serotonin. Nature's own positive-mood maker.

The happy man pushes on with work, steering the whirring rotavator as it devours the ground in ever-increasing circles. The labour is heavy, but his mood is light and, suddenly, the job is done. He turns off the

rotavator and, as he tries to find his land legs, finally looks up from the ground: the sun has banished the mist. Under a pristine blue sky, the whole oval valley lies glistening as if fresh born, with the fields all tied together with white-ribbon hedges of blackthorn.

His ears are ringing, from the grinding of the blades and ceaseless turning of the motor. But, through this cacophony, comes clear the piercing sharp song of a bird, a sound not unmetallic itself—as if children nearby were playing on a squeaky see-saw. So! The chiffchaff has arrived (although earlier peoples might have termed the warbler 'chip-chop', 'siff-saff', or perhaps 'choice and cheep', but all are onomatopoeic cognomen). The operator stares at the bird on the bough of the green-haloed ash tree as it peeps its repetitive two-syllable song, which, if unpretty, is the incontrovertible avian announcement of spring.

'Is this bird,' the labourer wonders, 'here by serendipity, by some lovely chance? Or, is it the same chiffchaff that arrived and sang in this precise spot, this exact date, last year? And perhaps whose plumed dynasties have flown bravely from Africa and heralded spring in this place since the first chiffchaff ever?' Whichever, the labourer knows that in choosing his land to sing over that the chiffchaff has performed a confirmation, a consecration even. How pleased the trees and the grass and the flowers must be to hear the little olive bird.

> "The cut worm forgives the plough," wrote William Blake in *Proverbs of Hell* and the operator hopes that this is so

The labourer, the glad chanted tidings of spring aside, has a utilitarian use for the chiffchaff. He knows he can tell the time of the day in spring and early summer by when birds sing. They take their cue from the rising sun, with each species keeping its ancient, time-allotted slot. (A Darwinian device or divine design, which allows the cocks of the species to sing against each other in clear rivalry, unmuddied by the songs of other birds.) The skylark sings more than an hour and a half before sunrise, which is a little early for our labourer. 'Up with the lark', he considers, is an idiom usually uttered only by those who are ignorant of the bird's matutinal habits. The chiffchaff, however, sings a convenient half hour before sun-up. If our labourer accidentally, or even intentionally, presses his mental 'snooze button', then the chaffinch will give him a 'get up' reminder five minutes later. If the fat house sparrow sings, then it is 10 minutes before sunrise. Should these three birds fail to evict the labourer from his bed, at sunrise the great alarm clock in the sky will sound. All the birds will burst out singing in unison. The dawn chorus.

It is, our labourer concedes, no bad way to be roused for his springtime work of ploughing and sowing, the calling of the birds. And the thought suddenly occurs, that long ago, when the first human in this place scratched at the ground with his deer-horn plough, he, too, was woken to his work by the chiffchaff.

Twice crowned victor of the Wainwright Prize for Nature writing, for 'Where Poppies Blow' and 'Meadowland', John Lewis-Stempel's latest book, 'Nightwalking', is out now (Doubleday, £9.99)

Robin Hanbury-Tenison

Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather.
John Ruskin

WE know that the climate is changing as a result of our activities and that this is beginning to happen at an accelerating pace, but it is still a slow process, whereas weather can change in an instant. All over the world, scientists and politicians are working on ways to modify the climate by slowing down the heating of the atmosphere, which is now becoming manifest. Suggesting that we might try and manage local weather, however, is usually met with either cynicism or alarm—and quite rightly so, as it is a complicated challenge and the implications of bringing it about are scary. Nonetheless, I do believe that we should be putting much more effort and resources into examining the possibilities.

> ‘Sure enough, the clouds cleared and the sun shone on the parading tanks’

Surprisingly few people know that weather management has been going on for a long time. It has throughout human history been an important part of the role of chiefs and kings to be responsible for the weather, but it is only since the Second World War that modern science has come into play. This has mainly been secret—and sometimes disastrous—research carried out by the military in various countries, such as the US during the Vietnam war and China during their hosting of the Olympic Games in 2008.

Russia always made sure it did not rain on their May Day parade, famously during the first US presidential attendance in 2005. The story goes that it was pouring down as the two presidents waited for the parade to begin. George W. Bush said to Vladimir Putin: ‘I didn’t think it ever rained on your parade.’ To which Putin replied: ‘Watch this space.’ Sure enough, within the hour, the clouds cleared and the sun shone on the parading tanks and troops. ‘How did you do that?’ asked Bush. ‘We did what we always do,’ came the reply. ‘We made it rain in the Ukraine.’ →

Make it rain: is it possible to turn the clouds on and off like a tap? And should we?

Don’t rain on my parade

Can we really control the weather? The implications are scary and complicated, but we should be researching the idea for use in a responsible way

A rare 'severe shelf' cloud over the Peak District. The ability to control where rain falls has enormous implications, for good and ill

That morning, some 30 aircraft had taken off from Moscow and flown west to 'seed' the approaching clouds. They have done so every year since. Ironically, on May Day 2022, at the height of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the process didn't work. It did rain on Putin's parade and the aerial flypast had to be cancelled. As *The Times* pointed out, this was something of a metaphor for what was happening on the ground.

One of the major concerns people have with the idea of weather management is that it might be used for military purposes or to give one country an advantage over another in various ways. There is, however, an international treaty in place designed to avoid this: The Environmental Modification Convention (ENMOD). It has been signed by 48 countries, including the US, Russia and the UK, but it is far from perfect. It prohibits any hostile or military use of weather modification, but it is allowed for peaceful purposes. This is something the UN should be addressing urgently if progress is to be made.

The implications of altering global rainfall patterns are huge. Throughout Africa, there is widespread concern about running out of water. In much of North Africa, groundwater is being pumped from non-renewable 'fossil' groundwater, often laid down hundreds, if not thousands of years ago. This is irresponsible and depletes resources permanently, as well as lowering the water table. Here, the answer is to generate surface water as needed so as to make it possible to grow crops.

In sub-Saharan Africa, most groundwater is stored in aquifers and cracks below the ground and is abundant, as well as being plentifully restored when there is rainfall. If this were done and there was widespread adoption of solar-powered water pumps, the capacity for everyone to have ready access to clean, fresh water would be almost infinite.

> 'Researchers are looking into harvesting the almost limitless oceanic moisture'

The same applies in much of South-East Asia, where the amount of extraction is too high for underground reservoirs to be replenished by rainfall. Often, as in Pakistan, pumped groundwater is used for agricultural irrigation, leading to village wells running dry.

These problems are not intractable: they simply require more investment in research, mapping and training for local people in sustainable use and extraction. Everything is possible with enough political will and there, as ever, is the rub, but times are changing and governments are, at last, waking up to the reality and urgency of addressing climate change.

One new, exciting development is a proposal to tap into the almost limitless supply of fresh water in clouds above the world's oceans. Researchers at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are looking into harvesting this oceanic moisture with the aid of huge offshore structures. These would condense the vapour and transport it to the mainland.

There is no shortage of fresh rainwater in the world—the problem is that most of it falls into the sea. We are the only known water planet; every function of life ends up being related to water and human evolution has been closely tied to it. Settled civilisations came about when people learned how to control and manage water, whether by digging wells, canalising rivers, making lakes or creating long underground aqueducts (qanats), which allowed for permanent agriculture.

The day has come when we need to look again at the role water plays in keeping us all alive. It should replace oil as our primary concern: the element upon which our survival may depend. The time has come for us to start taking control of our weather.

Robin Hanbury-Tenison is an explorer, a Royal Geographical Society Gold Medallist and an author. His most recent book is 'Taming the Four Horsemen' (2020)

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Forsythia viridissima **received its name when Martin Vahl determined to recognise William Forsyth, taking sides in a dispute over his ideas for treating diseased trees**

Who are you calling names?

From butterfly-friendly buddleia to decorative fuchsia, some of our most familiar shrubs owe their names to the friendship or admiration that linked botanists of the past, reveals **Ian Morton**

BRITAIN's first rockery was established in the Chelsea Physic Garden in 1774, with lumps of lava from Iceland, downland flint and chalk and 40 tons of stone from the site of the Tower of London. Its imaginative creator is not remembered for it. Neither is he celebrated as superintendent of George III's gardens at Kensington Palace and St James's Palace, nor as a member of the huddle of botanists who, in 1804, formed what would become the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), nor even as the central figure in a controversy involving a disputed treatment for diseased trees and a government grant of £1,500 (about £235,000 at today's value) to ensure a supply of healthy oaks for the Navy during the Napoleonic war. The payment infuriated other botanists, who subjected his reputation to intense scrutiny.

Instead, we unwittingly commemorate William Forsyth when the forsythia bursts into bloom, the flowers proving so impatient that they cannot wait for the leaves, and we know our flavescent year is truly in its stride. Yet Forsyth, Scottish-born botanist and author, revered in his early years as an orchard expert, had nothing to do with the shrub that bears his name. It was an 18th-century import. First spotted in Japan and

When Carl Linnaeus followed Dr William Houstoun's idea and named the butterfly favourite *Buddleia*, he ensured Essex parson the Revd Adam Buddle would never be forgotten. In *B. davidii*, Basque missionary Father Armand David is likewise commemorated

recorded by Carl Peter Thunberg in his *Flora Japonica* of 1784, it was misidentified as a lilac and classified as *Syringa suspensa*. A member of the olive family and widespread in the Far East, it was prized in China, where its flowers, *lian qiao*—'golden bells'—were deemed anti-inflammatory and fever-reducing.

Forsyth was endowed with the attribution only because, in 1804, an admirer, Danish botanist Martin Vahl, named the plant in his honour, in defiance of the dissension surrounding his reputation and a public feud with a young rival, Thomas Knight, who had questioned his aforementioned treatment. A mere four months after Knight was elected to the new horticultural society, Forsyth died aged 66, within the year *Forsythia suspensa* was officially registered. Vahl, too, died that year.

> 'Knight and Vahl are forgotten. Forsyth returns every spring. It is one of the great ironies in horticulture'

Knight and Vahl are forgotten. Forsyth returns every spring. It is one of the great ironies in horticulture. 'Forsythia is pure joy,' wrote Anne Morrow Lindbergh, wife of the American aviator. 'There is not an ounce, not a glimmer of sadness or even knowledge in Forsythia. Pure undiluted, untouched joy.'

Forsythia is not the only plant to have preserved the name of an otherwise forgotten figure for posterity. Among the enthusiastic explorers foraging abroad in the 18th century as interest in exotic plants gathered momentum was a Scottish surgeon and botanist, Dr William Houstoun, who sought new species in the Caribbean. In 1730, he sent examples of a previously unremarked plant to England with the proposal that it should be named in recognition of an English rector and naturalist who had died 15 years previously and who had compiled, but never published, a 1708 work on English flora.

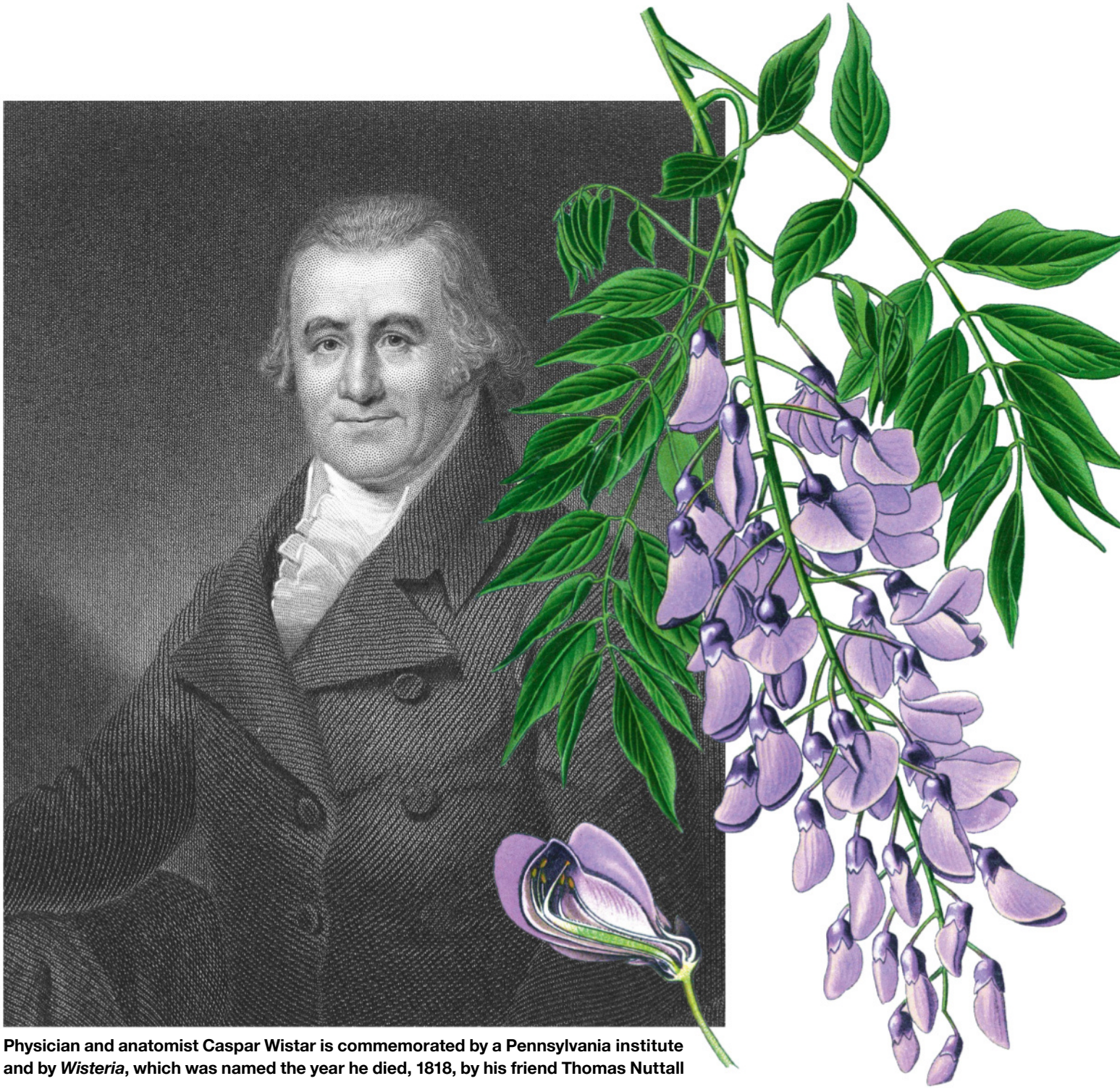
In 1753, the great arbiter of plant nomenclature, Carl Linnaeus, took up Houstoun's suggestion and dubbed the genus *Buddleia*, so preserving for posterity the memory →

Florilegius/Mary Evans Picture Library; Alamy; Getty; Medici/Mary Evans Picture Library

Monk and botanist Charles Plumier (*left*) paid tribute to 16th-century German doctor Leonhart Fuchs (*right*) by naming the West Indian plant he discovered in 1703 *Fuchsia*

of the Revd Adam Buddle, an obscure Essex parson noted only as the first to study mosses, hornworts and liverworts and in no wise a shrub expert. Nevertheless, the plant bearing his name is now found across four continents, with some 140 species recorded.

The most familiar here is *Buddleia davidii*, which originated in central China. For good measure, that variety also commemorates a 19th-century Basque missionary, Father Armand David, who is better known, if at all, for discovering the giant panda. Today, no country garden is complete without a bush or two, together with the abundant butterflies buddleias attract. The plant's extraordinary response to severe pruning and its ability to spread to and prosper on waste and broken ground present a model of horticultural vigour, yet its name remains, frankly, something of an historical absurdity.



Physician and anatomist Caspar Wistar is commemorated by a Pennsylvania institute and by *Wisteria*, which was named the year he died, 1818, by his friend Thomas Nuttall

The same applies to another widely grown plant. In 1818, an English botanist and zoologist living and working in Philadelphia, one Thomas Nuttall, published a paper on North American plants in which he named a species of woody vine in memory of a close friend, who died that same year. This friend, Caspar Wistar, member of a third-generation German immigrant family, was a physician, anatomist, advocate of vaccination and professor in the Pennsylvania school of medicine, who had received recognition for helping Thomas Jefferson to identify the fossilised bones of a giant sloth. He was no plantsman. But Nuttall felt it appropriate that his friend's memory should be enshrined in a species native to parts of North America and the Far East that had been gaining in popularity in horticultural circles since 1816. His paper duly named it *Wisteria*.

> 'Buddleia presents a model of horticultural vigour, yet its name remains, frankly, a historical absurdity'

An alternative tale suggests that another of Wistar's friends, botanist, geologist and Portuguese ambassador José Francisco Correia, chose the name. It matters little. Wistar was clearly well liked. In Pennsylvania, his memory is more appropriately perpetuated by the Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology. Two varieties of the hardy and fast-growing climber named after him are, today, especially popular, although, apart from their floral tones, their essential difference may not be easily perceived: *Wisteria sinensis* (the name recognises its Chinese origin) climbs anti-clockwise, but *W. floribunda* entwines clockwise. The oldest example in England, said to have been planted in 1816 before the name was established, adorns a wall at Fuller's Griffin brewery in Chiswick in west London.

If Nuttall named his find after a friend, no such link existed between Charles Plumier, monk and botanist to Louis XIV, and the man he honoured with his choice of nomenclature. Plumier made three plant-finding →

The name game

• **Carl Linnaeus,** the father of binomial taxonomy who classified more than 12,000 species of flora and fauna, did not himself quite escape the naming culture. In 1732, in Lapland, he discovered a small, evergreen shrub that produced pairs of nodding, pink, bell-shaped flowers (*above*), which he adopted as his personal favourite. After his patron, Dutch botanist Jan Frederik Gronovius, declared that it should be classified as *Linnaeus borealis* and Linnaeus accepted the accolade in his *Species Plantarum* of 1753. Found in cool pine woods in northern climes, scarce in this country and known as the twinflower, it featured in Linnaeus's coat of arms and in his portraits. It is also the official flower of Småland in Sweden, his birthplace

• Appropriately, the botanist with the highest nominal score is **Charles Darwin,** with nine genera and more than 300 species bearing his moniker. The one most likely to be familiar to gardeners is the prickly hedge favourite *Berberis darwinii*, native to South America and named for its discoverer by his close friend, collaborator and Kew director Sir Joseph Hooker. The father of evolution is the only botanist to have a city named after him, although Australia's Northern Territory capital, on the bay where HMS *Beagle* dropped anchor in 1839, was originally called Palmerston and only became Darwin in 1911

• Talking of Australia, the botanist who called together the founders of the original RHS and was later president of the Royal Society, **Sir Joseph Banks,** was instrumental in its colonisation, although, to his discredit, he subscribed to the prevailing *terra nullius* or 'empty land' policy, whereby indigenous peoples simply did not exist. He introduced eucalyptus and acacia to Britain, and some 170 plant species carry the Banksia name. Sailing with Capt James Cook (*above*) aboard *Endeavour*, Banks and Swedish fellow botanist Daniel Solander collected so many plants on landing at Stingrays Harbour that Cook later renamed it Botany Bay

expeditions to the West Indies over the end of the 17th century and, in 1703, returned to France with an intriguing plant with pendant flowers he had found on the island of Hispaniola, now divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He named it *Fuchsia* in memory of a 16th-century German botanist and medical doctor, Leonhart Fuchs, who had devoted his life to studying plants in search of herbal remedies. Plumier's designation was accepted in due course by Linnaeus, who returned the compliment by classifying the frangipane genus as *Plumeria*.

A fuchsia was established at Kew in 1788 and the plants arrived in English gardens thereafter. Horticulture embraced the hardy perennial, of which, globally, some 110 species are recognised, with 60 cultivars having received the RHS Award of Merit. No other shrub rivals *Fuchsia triphylla* for ease of cultivation and decorative variety. The man whose name it bears might at least have been gratified by the beneficial effects of the pleasure it generates.

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Join the club

Looks can be deceiving, as **Eleanor Doughty** discovers on a visit to the thoroughly modern Walbrook Club in the City of London

IT'S fair to say that the Walbrook Club is distinct in the modern City of London, with the offices of N. M. Rothschild towering over it. The club, akin to a doll's house, looks as if it has always been there, as if during the Blitz everything but the Walbrook was destroyed. In fact, it was built in 1952 by the property developer Rudolph Palumbo. Far from a city relic, it is only 71 years old.

In 2000, Palumbo's son Peter, now Baron Palumbo, opened the building as a private members' club designed by clubland king Mark Birley, founder of Annabel's. Today, it is run by Lord Palumbo's 30-year-old son, the Hon Philip Palumbo, who, after a tour, settles us down in a meeting room, wallpapered in William Morris, with a stuffed canary keeping watch in the window. 'He won a beauty pageant,' says Mr Palumbo by way of explanation.

No one leaves the dining room hungry at the Walbrook Club, says the Hon Philip Palumbo

> 'You can come here to celebrate, commiserate, whatever you like'

Mr Palumbo, a graduate in Middle Eastern studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, took over management of the Walbrook Club from his mother, Lady Palumbo, in 2018. Once harbouring a dream of being a diplomat, he reckons that 'running a club is not dissimilar to [that]—you bring people together, build a network, keep things ticking along'. Being a linguist helps, too, given the attention to detail required to run such an establishment: 'The slightest inflection and you've insulted someone's ancestor.' Walking around the dining room—painted pink in a shade chosen by his sister, Lady Lovat—he straightens a knife; as we talk, he pours himself cups of coffee, lining up both pot and milk jug. When *The Telegraph*'s Amanda Hall interviewed Mr Birley here in 2000, he moved her tape recorder back and forth across the table, straightening it 'in line with the edge'. Clearly, it is a Walbrook tick.

The club is in the heart of the City, with Bank station 100 yards away; Mr Palumbo uses exit eight on his daily commute. 'I love this part of town,' he says. 'It is much misunderstood—the profile of person is kinder and more enterprising than in the West End.' He believes the City has some of the best pubs in London, is partial to the Jamaica Wine House off Cornhill and is 'devoted' to the fish bar Sweetings on Queen Victoria Street. But there's a dearth of decent bars, he says. 'I can't remember the last time I went to a good bar in London outside a hotel.' His favourite is the Loosbar in Vienna. 'I'd love to bring a tribute to it here, something where chance encounters are facilitated by the architecture of the space' and where he can order a negroni: 'That's the Italian in me.' He has plenty of ideas for the City and, last year, stood to be Alderman of the Walbrook ward. 'Why not put a screen showing the tennis on Bank junction during Wimbledon and divert a trickle of the torrent that goes to watch at St Paul's?'

The pandemic presented difficulties for the Walbrook, but it emerged with the membership 'only minus two'. Still, says Mr Palumbo, the City continues to 'encounter resistance during the bookend days of the week. I hate seeing it so hollowed out—I don't want to live in Frankfurt'. For those who have grown used to working at home with their labrador, he points out that the Walbrook is dog friendly. The club has about 600 'sociable and aspirational' members, both men and women; I look in *Who's Who* and find a former chairman of Morgan Stanley, several former Lord Mayors of London, a KC, a former ambassador's wife, a Conservative party donor and a magazine editor among them. None of these fall within the 30% of members under 35 that Mr Palumbo has 'actively sought out... they have made this place so vibrant'. He encourages business at the club and, in 2018, relaxed the compulsory-tie rule. 'The space is versatile—you can come here to celebrate, commiserate, whatever you like. I want deals to be struck here.' The basement meeting room is next to the staff entrance, where members can sneak in unnoticed. The guest-speaker programme is a further perk of membership. Boris Johnson is yet to make an appearance—'but, why not?'

Our meeting wraps up in time for Mr Palumbo to attend a club curry lunch, but he commends his regular menu to me. The potted shrimp is 'the best you've had' and 'we have a beef stroganoff that will knock your socks off'. The Walbrook food is 'unpretentious'; he can't bear 'emulsions, reductions, things being atomised... it's such a waste of time'. Clubs cannot have Michelin stars, as they are not open to the public, but he believes his food deserves one. 'You don't leave here hungry. There's nothing like having dinner somewhere and then going home and having to have dinner again.'

City clubbing

Ned's Club at The Ned
Part of the Soho House Group, the Ned occupies the old Midland Bank building on Poultry; another of the group's outposts, Shoreditch House, is a mile away on Ebor Street

Eight Club
Two locations, in Bank and Moorgate, offer lounges, bars and meeting rooms, plus views of the City from Moorgate's terraces

Ten Trinity Square
Inside the Four Seasons Hotel near Tower Hill, it has a focus on food and wine with a Château Latour tasting room

Hubert Cecil

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The hovercraft

by Sir Christopher Cockerell

Flight of fancy: the SR-N1 experimental hovercraft, built by Isle of Wight-based firm Saunders-Roe, takes to the River Thames in 1960

YOU knew you were living in the age of the hovercraft when James Bond (Sean Connery), impersonating a jewel smuggler, boarded one to cross the English Channel in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971). They even blasted out the thrilling 007 theme as the camera zoomed in on a hovercraft symbol above the Port of Dover entrance as if it was an exotic beast, then cut to the SR-N4 *Princess Margaret* surfing away from the white cliffs.

Time would leave the hovercraft behind, but if its Bond cameo looks a bit clunky today, in its heyday the vessel was a British invention to be proud of and it was considered a genuine thrill to travel on one. It was certainly fast, the regular service by the late 1960s taking passengers and cars across to France in 35 minutes, faster than any conventional boat of similar power. According to *Guinness World Records* in 1995, the SR-N4 *Princess Anne* completed the Dover-Calais run in 22 minutes, with an unofficial record for the crossing being a little over 15 minutes.

> 'On board for the maiden flight in 1959 was an anxious Cockerell, serving as "moveable ballast"'

Although Sir Christopher Cockerell is remembered as the inventor of the hovercraft, scientists and engineers had been exploring ways of making an effective air-cushioned sea craft for years. When a boat moves through water, momentum is slowed by the drag on the hull, so the quest had been to find a design that could reduce the friction. Sir John Isaac Thornycroft (1843–1928) built light torpedo craft at his shipyard in Chiswick from the 1870s and, in 1877, patented a concave-bottomed ship that would be carried along the surface on a cushion of air, using a basic bellows system.

The problem of how to provide a consistent supply of air was not fully mastered, however, until Cockerell (1910–99) set his mind to it. The son of Sir Sydney Cockerell, a distinguished curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Cockerell had worked for Marconi

Hover country

It is the Solent area that can now lay claim to be the last great hovercraft stronghold. The Isle of Wight is the home of the last commercially operating hovercraft service in the world, transporting passengers between Ryde and Southsea, a 10-minute crossing. The Isle of Wight is also where the first hovercrafts were manufactured by the Cowes-based firm Saunders-Roe (*pictured*), a company that had long been involved in the manufacture of flying boats.

Back across the water, the Hovercraft Museum, at Lee-on-the-Solent, houses an extraordinary collection of important hovercraft and related archive materials. Many of Sir John Thornycroft's original working models are displayed in the museum, as is Cockerell's prototype for the hovercraft. Together with the world's largest commercial hovercraft, the SR-N4 *Princess Anne*, the collection includes the hovercraft that featured in the James Bond film *Die Another Day* (2002), starring Pierce Brosnan.

Hovercraft inventor Christopher Cockerell (*left*) with supporter Lord Mountbatten in 1965

Getty

What they said

'It can rise and hover and then move away, and therefore needs neither harbours nor runways. It can travel over the sea, over a marsh, up the beach and on to the land'
An early Cockerell report on his invention

'One of Cockerell's treasured anecdotes was of a meeting in Whitehall with Admiralty and Ministry of Supply officials jumping on chairs to get out of the way as the machine charged round the office spewing fumes'
'Guardian' obituary describing Cockerell's vain attempt to woo officialdom in 1955

'A hovercraft flies; it is not in contact with the ground in its operation, therefore technically its airborne flight characteristics make it an aircraft'
Ashley Hollebone, 'The Hovercraft, A History'

on radar systems during the Second World War, but, in 1950, he bought a small boatyard at Somerleyton, Suffolk, where he built and let out cruising boats to holidaymakers exploring the Norfolk Broads.

In his spare moments, with some able assistants, he experimented with various plans for air-cushioned craft. His eventual idea, arrived at in 1954, was a ring of air pressure trapped within a cushion, which reduced the power required for a vessel to stay above the water. The workshop used to construct the first working, balsawood model for what Cockerell himself would name the hovercraft was an old tool shed in his boatyard, but the prototype testing was conducted on the smooth surface of the Pergola Lawn at neighbouring Somerleyton Hall.

Lord Somerleyton was sufficiently impressed to inform Lord Mountbatten, then First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, but it would be a civilian version of the amphibious vessel, the SR-N1, built by Saunders-Roe at Cowes on the Isle of Wight, that launched off the Solent in the summer of 1959. On board for this maiden flight (in official transportation parlance a hovercraft flies rather than sails) was an anxious Cockerell, serving, as he described it, as 'moveable ballast'.

The flight was pronounced a success and, over the years, the SR-N1 underwent refinement; the first commercial cross-Channel passenger-carrying services, operating between Ramsgate and Dover and Calais and Boulogne, began in 1966. For a while, there was great interest around the world in the manufacture of air-cushioned, all-terrain vehicles. Cockerell would be knighted for his achievements in 1969, by which time hovercraft services were accounting for up to one-third of all cross-Channel passengers.

The glory years were short-lived, however. Turning a profit was never easy, a situation made harder by the rising cost of fuel in the wake of the oil crisis of 1973–74. Competition from larger, increasingly efficient ferries grew, and then came the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994. Hovercraft services across the Channel were wound up in 2000.

Jack Watkins

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Cheek to cheek

My face was recently perfectly pummelled by the experts at David Jack's newly opened clinic at 59, Ebury Street, Belgravia, SW1 (*above*). Dr Jack (an avid COUNTRY LIFE reader and the nicest man in the business) ensures his treatment spaces are less clinical than the rest through his passion for beautiful interior design and collecting fine antiques. The facials use lymphatic drainage, which lifts cheeks with astonishing results, and the Skintech Studio offers speedy treatments with clever LED light therapy. Facials from £130, LED facial £70 (020–7589 6309; www.drdavidjack.com).

Fanatical about food

FOR those interested in food and drink (that's everyone, then) iconic grocer Fortnum & Mason, at 181, Piccadilly, London W1, has developed a new Food and Drink Studio on its third floor (opening March 31).

Intrigued foodies can take part in workshops, live cooking demonstrations and experimentation (Scotch-egg tasting, anyone?) in a new multi-use kitchen. Expect some well-known chefs to pop up and there will be a gin distillery and a smart new cookware range, too.

Of course, it wouldn't be complete without a nod to the world-famous hampers (*below*)—visitors can create beautifully bespoke iterations in the Hamper Zone. I might move in (www.fortnumandmason.com).

Foot in the door

I recently saw shoe designer Camilla Elphick's new spring-summer collection on a freezing cold, drizzly day and it was a tonic, being full of jolly colours and designs. The designer makes beautiful shoes, boots, wedges, trainers and, now, children's versions, too, but these Lucia slingbacks (for grown-ups) are exactly the right height for staying upright all day, whatever the weather. £225 (020–8969 6966; www.camillaelphick.com).

James McDonald; Jake Eastham; Chloe Winstanley

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Helmsley 3 Seater Sofa in Bird and Rabbit Dark Green
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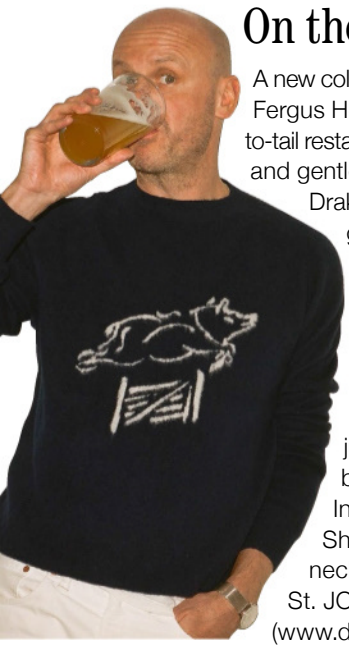
Ground yourself

Limewood, the historic New Forest country-house hotel (*above*), has a fantastic new spa partner, Ground Wellbeing, the brainchild of Peigin Crowley, whose products are hand-made in small batches in Co Cork, Ireland. The dreamy products are available to purchase in the spa shop and there are several Ground treatments now on the menu. My favourite is the Grounding Ritual, which is a glorious 90-minute, full-body experience. Instead of working top to toe, therapists cleverly work on one side of the body at a time, using long, sweeping strokes. Reflexology, head and facial massage top off the blissful session. Limewood's Herb House Spa is the only British spa to stock Ground products. I recommend that regular visitors to and neighbours of the hotel investigate a Herb House membership, which qualifies you for access to the gym, group fitness classes and tantalising discounts off treatments, food and products. Ground treatments from £130; spa days from £175 (023–8028 7177; www.limewoodhotel.co.uk). *RP*

Luxury (under £25)

I LIKE to use this column to showcase the things that have become the life essentials I never knew I needed—such as this laptop brush. Sold by The Oxford Brush Company and beautifully made by German brush makers Redecker, its oiled beechwood holds two brushes: one is soft, light goat hair and the other is stiff, black, boar bristle. They get into every crevice. £17.95 (www.oxfordbrushcompany.com).



On the nose

A new collaboration between Fergus Henderson's nose-to-tail restaurant St John, EC1, and gentlemen's outfitters Drake's celebrates two great things in life—a long lunch and quality, comfortable clothes in which to dine. I love the irreverent designs and this jumper could surely be unisex. Navy Intarsia brushed Shetland crew neck jumper, £395, St. JOHN by Drake's (www.drakes.com).

Padding around

How kitsch and lovely are these limited-edition, Fermoie fabric cushions, designed for dogs and handmade in small batches in the Dorset countryside. They'll be begging for more. £150, Palmona's Products (www.palomasproducts.co.uk).

High Five

Western-inspired boots are having a moment

Howdy embellished western boot, £575, Russell & Bromley (www.russellandbromley.co.uk)

Round Up back-zip western boot, £165, Ariat (www.ariat.com)

Devil's Backbone cowboy boot in powder pink, £369, India Hicks for Penelope Chilvers (www.penelopechilvers.com)

Embroidered leather ankle boots, £445, Ganni (www.ganni.com)

The Rockingham ankle boot in mahogany leather, £250, Fairfax & Favor (www.fairfaxandfavor.com)

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A few of my favourite things

Ollie Dabbous

A regular judge on *MasterChef: The Professionals*, the Michelin-starred chef's restaurant HIDE in London's Piccadilly is a collaboration with Hedonism Wines. It was given a coveted five stars in the *Evening Standard*, made *GQ* restaurant of the year and awarded a Michelin star, all within six months of opening. Ollie returns to Royal Ascot this year to host Royal Enclosure restaurant The Sandringham from June 20–24.

Words by Hetty Lintell. Illustrations by Ollie Maxwell

◀ My Gaggenau kitchen appliances combine beautiful design and amazing performance. The food I cook at home is very different to what we produce at HIDE, but it's a pleasure cooking on my days off with such top-quality kit. You can place pans anywhere on the induction hob, it is very easy to clean and has telescopic extraction. The fridge keeps food much fresher for longer and the oven has a built-in temperature probe, so you get perfect results every time (www.gaggenau.com).

▼ Wicked Mata produces beautifully crafted handmade tables to your requirements and taste. We visited the company's showroom and saw behind the scenes, where it was genuinely inspiring to see people so passionate about their work. The craftsmen made us a live-edge table that is both organic and elegant; it is something we use and enjoy every day (www.lateliermata.co.uk).

▲ My uniform in the kitchen is very matter of fact, but I always wear a leather jacket to and from work. They last forever; my current favourite is from All Saints. I rarely carry an umbrella, but it doesn't matter too much if it rains as these are so durable and a design classic (www.allsaints.com).

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Painterly effect

Beautiful rings bring a wearer great joy and these cocktail rings will brighten any outfit– and your mood

Styled by Hetty Lintell. Photographed by Paul Zak

From left: **Charlemagne ring** with purple sapphire, green garnet and diamond, £26,000, Elizabeth Gage (020–7823 0100; www.elizabeth-gage.com); **Art Deco aquamarine ring,** price on application, Hirsh (020–7499 6814; www.hirshlondon.com); **Artemis Regal ring,** £11,000, Hirsh (*as before*); **Kiki Unique blue tourmaline and diamond ring** in yellow gold, £9,500, Kiki McDonough (020–7730 3323; www.kiki.co.uk); **Yellow sapphire and diamond three-stone ring,** £13,929, Julia Lloyd George (020–7373 5093; www.julialloydgeorge.com); **Pavilion emerald diamond ring,** price on application, Boodles (020–7647 1360; www.boodles.com); **Pink spinel ring** with purple sapphires and white diamonds, price on application, David Morris (020–7499 2200; www.davidmorris.com); **Victorian mahogany Winsor & Newton artist's box,** courtesy of Bentleys London (020–7730 6832; www.bentleyslondon.com)

Jewellery for generations

At G. Collins & Sons, an experienced team working from a chocolate-box workshop hand-makes exceptional pieces that are the heirlooms of tomorrow

JEWELLERY should take you on a journey, from the spark of an idea to a beautiful, finished piece to be treasured. At family jewellers G. Collins & Sons, the team is passionate about providing the very best of design and expertise in a friendly, relaxed environment, ensuring that each individual journey is as special and sparkly as can be. Quality and service to its loyal customers will always come first.

One might assume that G. Collins & Sons has resided in Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, for centuries, so established is its delightful chocolate-box, Tudor-fronted shop. In fact, Harry Collins upped sticks from London's Bond Street in 1985 to set up his own establishment, servicing locals and visitors alike with the finest jewellery set with exquisite stones in striking designs. It is here that clients feel special and leave feeling part of an extended Collins family.

> 'We take pride in the quality of craftsmanship and service we offer; we're very much your local family jeweller'

'We take pride in the quality of craftsmanship and the level of service we offer; we're very much your local family jeweller—but with a difference. We create heirloom pieces that you can pass on to the next generation and we create them here, in Royal Tunbridge Wells. By having the workshop and showroom all under one roof,

Sienna Collection diamond star necklace, 1.79cts total diamond weight, 18ct white gold, £21,940

G. Collins & Sons jewellery is wearable, beautifully made and a future heirloom

The Collins craftspeople have more than 400 years of combined experience and many have worked on historic collections

3.02ct flawless yellow and white diamond ring, GIA certified, POA

we're able to control every detail of our jewellery creations,' says Josh Collins, Harry's son, who joined the company at 16 and is now managing director.

Set over three floors above the company's charming shop is the workshop, where every intricate step of the craftsmanship takes place—it is a rarity these days to have everything under one roof and something of which G. Collins is especially proud. What's as reassuring as it is special is that, as a client, you'll know where your jewellery is at all times. Collins can count on 23 craftspeople, many of whom have worked on famous and historic jewellery collections. Combined together, the workshop team boasts more than 400 years of jewellery-making experience at the highest level. Having this calibre of expertise together under one roof is truly special and allows G. Collins & Sons to focus on creating the finest handcrafted jewellery in the world.

As a family business through and through, it makes perfect sense that Josh's wife, Julia, recently designed the Sienna Collection, named after their baby daughter. This range of pendants, bracelets and earrings is infinitely wearable—they are modern heirlooms of the future, suiting all ages and tastes. Some of the smaller studs are perfect for the day and the drops would look particularly lovely in the evening.

Fit for a Queen: G. Collins & Sons was appointed personal jeweller to Elizabeth II

Harry Collins was honoured to be appointed as personal jeweller to Elizabeth II in 2005, a role which involved looking after Her Majesty's personal collection.

For further information, please telephone 01892 534018, visit www.gcollinsandsons.com or email sales@gcollinsandsons.com

Hot topics

The latest and tastiest new kitchen ideas, selected by **Amelia Thorpe**

Custom fit
Bespoke painted cupboards with iron handles accentuate the timeless beauty of this double-height space, as a glazed screen allows 'borrowed' light into the rear of the building. Kitchen prices from £35,000, supply only, Plain English (020–7486 2674; www.plainenglishdesign.co.uk)

Elegant simplicity
'The best way to create timeless design is to work in harmony with a building's architecture, to avoid trends and to know where to stop to achieve the understated,' advises Nick Anderson, managing director of Guild Anderson, the Wiltshire-based bespoke kitchen specialist known for creating quietly elegant designs that maintain the spirit of period country homes. Kitchen prices from £60,000 (01747 820449; www.guildandersonfurniture.co.uk)

Chin-chin
Italian manufacturer Officine Gullo, known for its luxury, professional-style range cookers, is introducing a new Cocktail Bar Cart, from £8,500, which includes compartments for ice, bottles, glassware and accessories—there's even space for the shaker and condiments (020–7036 1632; www.officinegullo.com)

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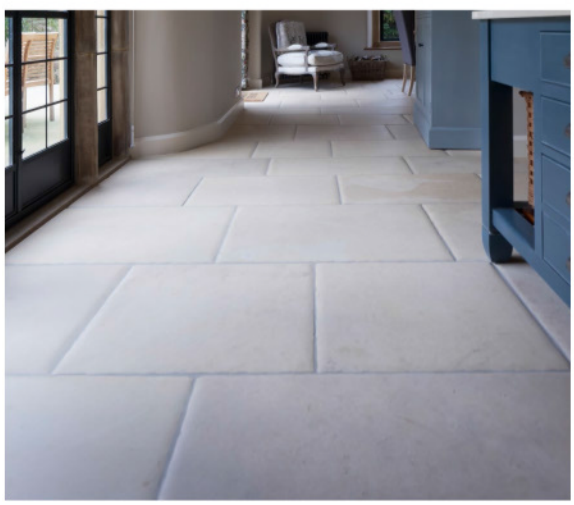
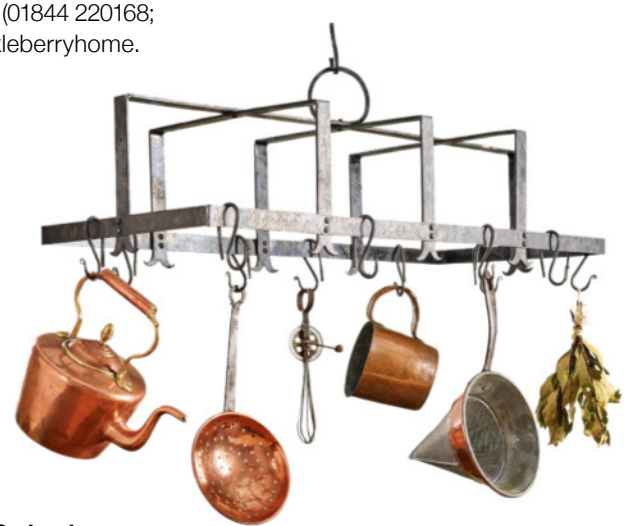
◀ Born free
Huckleberry's range of freestanding furniture pieces includes this wide Base cabinet No 2 with six drawers, painted in Pumpkin Pie with an oak top, £5,964 excluding appliances (01844 220168; www.huckleberryhome.co.uk)

▲ Gustavian character
Inspired by classic Swedish style, Susie Watson Designs's hand-carved furniture collection includes this Gustavian dining table, from £1,700, Curved Top dressers, £2,450 each, and Gustavian armoire, from £3,150 (0344 980 8185; www.susiewatsondesigns.co.uk)

▶ Natural choice
The warm tones and soft hues of Cradley English limestone, £205 per sq m, make it well suited to flooring in period country homes, hand-finished by British stone specialist Artorius Faber (01935 847333; www.artoriusfaber.com)





▲ Swing low
Born in its own forge, Blake & Bull's new rectangular Kitchen Pot Hanger, £628, is made from hammered raw steel with a bees-wax protective finish (01225 541006; www.blakeandbull.co.uk) →

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▲ **Light fantastic**
Handmade in the traditional way from glass mixed with real gold to create the striking pink hue, the Frilly Cranberry light, £360, is sure to add delicate warmth to any kitchen, from deVOL (01509 606011; www.devolkitchens.co.uk)

Pick of the crop Kitchen chairs

Bobbin carver chair, £1,285, Julian Chichester (020–7622 2928; www.julianchichester.com)

Wardley dining chair in Juniper, £395.50, Neptune (01793 934011; www.neptune.com)

Rattan dining chair, £375, Birdie Fortescue (01328 851651; www.birdiefortescue.co.uk)

▼ **Classic focus**
A traditional cook's table, made of oak and topped with smooth sycamore and Carrara marble, is the centrepiece of this bespoke kitchen, which also features a substantial Everhot cooker and timeless cabinetry, in keeping with the Edwardian age of the house, yet designed to suit modern life, by Artichoke. Kitchen prices from £250,000 (01934 745270; www.artichoke-ltd.com); Everhot (01453 890018; https://everhot.co.uk)

▼ **Ready to go**
Bifold doors open to allow easy access to the contents of this roomy cupboard, complete with integrated electrical sockets, so that the toaster is ready for action. Close the doors when breakfast is over and crumbs are hidden from sight. The New Classic Collection cabinetry, painted in Mist, is from Martin Moore, kitchen prices from £45,000 (0845 180 0015; www.martinmoore.com)

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▲ **Make me blush**
Modern British designs and makes kitchens and furniture at its Hampshire base, including this contemporary Grid design, featuring a solid walnut and cherry frame and Blush Rose lacquered door fronts with brushed-brass Half Moon edge pulls. Kitchen prices from £80,000 (0800 038 5245; www.modern-british.com)

▲ **Material matters**
Known for his inspired use of luxurious materials, Charlie Smallbone of Ledbury Studio has finished this centrepiece island in hand-carved stained oak and patinated copper. Kitchen prices from £70,000 (020–7566 6794; www.ledburystudio.com)

▼ **Bright and beautiful**
Everhot has added a new colour—Lavender—to its rainbow of cheery shades. The 150i, shown here, costs £12,600 (01453 890018; https://everhot.co.uk)

▼ **Fresh colour**
These Chichester laundry cabinets are painted in Rhubarb, a spirited colour designed to elevate even the most functional of spaces. Laundry-room prices, including full-height, base and wall cabinets, from £8,000, from Neptune (01793 934011; www.neptune.com)

Ledbury
STUDIO
KITCHEN DESIGN by CHARLIE SMALLBONE
4b Ledbury Mews North Notting Hill London W11 2AF
020 7566 6794 ledburystudio.com

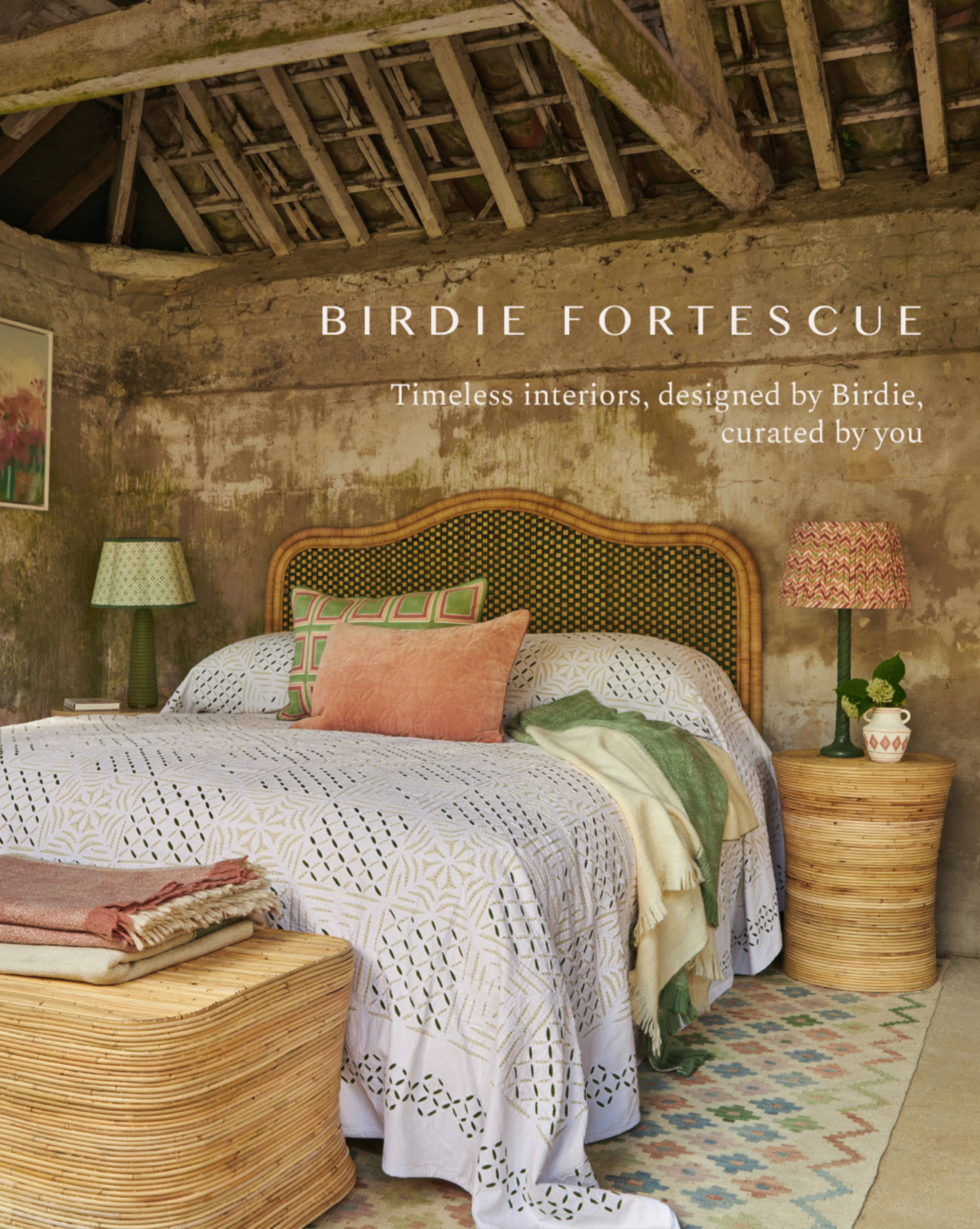
Tranquil hues
Designed to offer the look of terrazzo with the easy maintenance and durability of porcelain, Toledo tiles, £70.80 per sq m, are shown here in Green and Blue for subtle variation, from Mandarin Stone (01600 715444; www.mandarinstone.com)

Hand finish
These Kilburn shelf brackets, from £32.40 each, have a Bronze finish, applied by hand and designed to develop a subtle patina over time, from Corston Architectural Detail (01249 549332; www.corston.com)

Ageing gracefully
Four Mayan taps, made by British brassware specialist Perrin & Rowe exclusively for deVOL, £360 each, complete this charming room, their Aged Brass finish designed to improve with every use (01509 606011; www.devolkitchens.co.uk)

Natural touch
Lapicida's Spanish handmade terracotta floor tiles, £106.80 per sq m, available in Natural, Light and Black, will add rustic charm to any kitchen (01423 400100; lapicida.com)

Perfect balance
The weighted brass egg of the Equilibrium single rise and fall pendant allows you to adjust the shade to find the perfect height above your table or island. With a large 38cm (15in) Hania ceramic shade in Pacific Blue, the set costs £275, from Pooky (020–7351 3003; www.pooky.com)



birdiefortescue.co.uk | The Barn, Feathers Yard, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6BW

Sociable space
Bar chairs at the island and a comfortable window seat add welcoming touches to this Hartford kitchen in Avocado by Tom Howley, prices from £25,000 (0161–848 1200; www.tomhowley.co.uk)

Twice as nice
The sturdy Shaker Double 800 fireclay sink, £892, from Shaws of Darwen (01254 775111; www.shawsofdarwen.com) completes this elegant white-on-white design by Shere Kitchens, prices from £40,000 (01483 202143; www.sherekitchens.co.uk)

Open bar
Complete with internal shelves and a practical pull-out counter, the New-Shaker drinks cabinet in Gorse Bud, £2,995, is designed for storing bottles and glassware and for serving favourite tipples, from Pilgrim (01789 869824; www.pilgrimhouse.co.uk)

Pick of the crop
jugs

Jack Welbourne large Herringbone jug, £69, Toast (0333 400 5200; www.toa.st)

Cabbage pitcher in Green, £32, Daylesford (01608 731670; www.daylesford.com)

Brigitte Colleaux milk jug, 25cl, £29, David Mellor (020–8050 4259; www.davidmellordesign.com)

Shere Kitchens image: Julia Curry

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Colour made simple

Neptune's new colour consultancy will demystify the choice process and unlock the potential of every room in the home, from kitchens and living rooms to bedrooms and bathrooms

Top: **The Ardingly cabinet in Burnt Sienna.** *Left:* **The Aldwych chest of drawers in Fine Mahogany.** *Right:* **Bold colour makes doors stand out**

OF all the aspects of transforming a home, choosing colour is one of the simplest and least expensive. It's also among the most exciting, with a capacity to create a huge variety of different moods. Yet, the subtle nuances and the way that different colours interact with one another—as well as different types of light—can make choosing the right shade an overwhelming and often time-consuming task.

> 'Neptune's stores offer plenty of inspiration for the possibilities that colour creates'

Neptune's new colour consultancy will demystify the complexities of the process, offering you the chance to benefit from the experience of one of its own experts, who will help you make transformative choices using the company's curated palette of more than 50 shades. Its stores offer plenty of inspiration for the possibilities that colour creates; every spring and autumn, Neptune adds a new shade to its range, the latest being Rhubarb, which brings a zesty freshness to walls, cabinetry and furniture. Neptune's painted furniture is available in any one of its colours.

Visit www.neptune.com/colour-consultancy to book a consultation

NEPTUNE

Statement piece: the large Chichester washstand in warm Paprika, against Rhubarb trims

HOW IT WORKS

BOOKING
A consultation can be arranged online, by calling or by visiting your nearest store

BRIEFING
Your chance to share your vision, this element gives your consultant a better idea of the shades and combinations to which you might be drawn

A HOME VISIT
Your consultant will visit your home and, at the end, will give you a wallet containing swatches of the proposed paint colours for each room

A CUSTOM COLOUR PLAN
You will be sent a detailed plan outlining the colours, finishes, areas of application and quantities. If you are working with a decorator, your consultant can also discuss the colour plan with them

COST
A one-hour consultation that will provide expertly-chosen palettes for up to four of your rooms costs £200. If you would like to discuss more than four rooms, the cost is an additional £50 for every hour thereafter

Arabella Youens

Hold the fort

Castles and castellated buildings have a fairy tale-like allure over some buyers—especially those from overseas or with a love of history

Above: **Magnificent Otterburn Castle is a historic landmark set in 32 acres in Northumberland. £3m.** *Below:* **The stately reception hall**

THIS week sees the launch of Otterburn Castle, a splendid, Grade II-listed historic landmark sitting in 32 acres within the Northumberland National Park at the heart of the Redesdale Valley. The origins of Otterburn can be traced back to 1076 when William the Conqueror, having enjoyed a full decade of life on these shores, gave the land to his cousin, Robert d'Umfraville in recognition of his services. He instructed Robert to hold the land and 'keep it free from wolves and enemies'.

A survey commissioned in 1308 shows evidence of a peel tower that was built on the site, together with a park stocked with 'wild beasts'; some 80 years later, the English army suffered a bloody defeat during the battle of Otterburn at the hands of the Scottish, led by the Earl of Douglas, who tried to take the tower.

Life at Otterburn continued. Used as a hunting lodge during the 15th century, it passed to the Hall family in the reign of Henry VIII—for reasons that remain unclear. John Hall is noted as a Sequester under Cromwell (meaning he confiscated enemy property) and became Commissioner for Enclosure in 1552. His most infamous successor was 'Mad Jack Ha', who features in William Harrison Ainsworth's novel *Preston Fight* for his part in the 1715 Jacobite rising. A cat with not quite nine lives, 'Mad Jack' was finally convicted for his 'crimes' after five reprieves and hanged at Tyburn in July 1716.

Today's Grade II-listed castellated tower, incorporating a Tudor-arched entry, was built in the 1830s by Thomas James on the foundations of the original structure, using

some of the original stones. It was then extended in 1904 by F. W. Rich for the owner, one Howard Pease, a wealthy businessman from the Middlesbrough area; his widow sold the property in 1931.

That was the last time the house was used as a home. Otterburn Castle was converted into a hotel in the 1940s—a role it still performs today. Retaining many of its historic features, including oak wall panelling, intricate plasterwork and stone-mullioned windows, the property has 18 bedrooms (all en suite), together with several large reception rooms and a catering-standard kitchen. Otterburn would suit someone with a taste for entertaining: the garden room can accommodate 120 guests comfortably.

'Homes with rich histories like Otterburn open up the market to international interest, and castles even more so,' says Oliver Custance Baker, head of Strutt & Parker's country department. 'The stories that are part of these houses are an integral part of what makes them so special, together with their location and architecture. Here, it's a piece of Northumberland—and British—history for sale.'

> 'The stories of these houses are an integral part of what makes them so special. Here, it's a piece of history'

There's a mix of people looking to buy in Northumberland, he continues. Some are local or returning having lived in the South, others are drawn to the national park and 'impressive coastline' and, for the remainder, it's about the space on offer. 'At Otterburn Castle, you've got formal gardens, parkland, pasture and more than three miles of your own fishing—even without the castle, it would still be a fairy tale.' It is on the market for £3 million through Strutt & Parker (020–7591 2207).

Stowe Castle is an 18th-century farmhouse wittily disguised as a medieval-style castle built to act as an eyecatcher from the Temple of Friendship in the gardens of Stowe House in Buckinghamshire. The striking building features a high stone curtain wall topped with 60ft of castellations that hide the farmhouse and its associated farm buildings. It has been attributed to James Gibbs and was built in 1740, as were many of the other temples and statues that are scattered around the Stowe grounds. It was Country Life's first issue, published on January 8, 1897 (and priced sixpence), that carried an advertisement for Stowe House in Buckinghamshire. 'The stately ancestral home of the Dukes of Buckingham and Chandos' had become vacant on the death of its tenant, the Comte de Paris, and the agents, Messrs Walton & Lee, were hoping to find a new tenant for the 'noble seat'; the deer park of 1,100 acres had recently been redrained 'in accordance with modern requirements'. The house went into a state of decline and it was eventually sold through Jackson-Stops in 1921; Stowe School opened two years later.

Stowe Castle (*above*) in Buckinghamshire is blessed with exquisite interiors (*below*). £4.5m

It's not clear when Stowe Castle became inhabited, but, as it has two front doors and two staircases, it's assumed that it was once occupied as two properties. The castle itself is thought to have been sold off from Stowe House grounds in the 1840s, when the then owner, the 2nd Duke of Buckingham, was struggling to pay his debts. To raise money, contents of Stowe House were auctioned off and substantial amounts of land sold.

Sometime after Stowe House was saved from potential demolition and turned into the school, Stowe Castle and the surrounding farmland were bought by the Russell family. John Russell sold the castle from its farmland in the late 1980s and the property has changed hands several times, until it was bought, in 2015, by the current vendor.

The five-bedroom house of just over 4,000sq ft is arranged in a horseshoe shape →

and stands in 1¾ acres. It was redecorated by the interior designer Katharine Pooley and has plenty of details, including arched doorways, solid-oak doors, an ornate marble fireplace and decorative cornicing. There's also a helipad, wine cellar and a guest house. Those looking for more space have the potential to update the large attic space on the second floor (subject to the usual consents).

> 'Stowe Castle represents a one-off opportunity to own a castle in the Home Counties'

Outside are mature gardens surrounded by open countryside. A stone colonnade pergola leads from the rear of the house to a one-bedroom annexe and, at the front of the house, stands a barn that has been converted into a 2,727sq ft party barn with a bedroom above. Stowe Castle represents a one-off opportunity to own a castle in the Home Counties, says selling agent Hugh Maconochie from Savills. 'It's a beautiful historic home with the most exquisite interiors.' Joint selling agent Edward Welton of Knight Frank adds that the castle is 'the perfect example of traditional meets contemporary'. Savills (020–7016 3713) and Knight Frank (020–7861 1114) are asking £4.5m.

For something on a more modest scale, Fine & Country are selling Tower House in the Lancashire coastal village of Silverdale, which stands within the Arnside and Silverdale AONB. The stone-built Grade II-listed house has four bedrooms and a family kitchen complete with an Aga. In the grounds stands Lindeth Tower, also listed Grade II. The castellated tower, a Victorian folly, is arranged as one property with a kitchen, sitting room and bedroom, crowned with a roof terrace boasting sea views.

Lindeth Tower (*above*) and Tower House (*below*) in Silverdale, Lancashire. £895,000

Run as a holiday cottage, it's said to have once been a favourite retreat of the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell. The author is thought to have written her novel *Ruth* in the tower shortly after it was built. According to a letter written in 1858, she was less than enamoured with the tower at first sight, however. 'Lindeth Tower sounds very grand but it is a queer ugly square tower in our garden—the latter is full of weeds.' No longer the case, the vendors have carefully tended the well-stocked walled garden for more than 30 years. Fine & Country (01524 380560) are asking £895,000.

HECTOR FINCH

James Fisher

The beauty of British buildings

ENTRIES are open for the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust's 2023 Building Beauty Awards, sponsored by Ballymore. The overall winner of this year's awards will take home a cash prize of £12,000 and will go on to represent the UK in the race to be crowned the world's most beautiful new building at the World Architecture Festival in Singapore in November. To qualify, the project must have been completed and visible since the start of 2022 and the deadline for entries is May 2. Everyone from members of the public to architects are invited to apply; visit www.buildingbeautyawards.com to enter.

Last year's engineering and overall winner was the Tintagel Castle footbridge in Cornwall (*above*), which was praised for its 'boldness that suits the rough and raw Atlantic coast in Cornwall'. The bridge was designed by Ney & Partners and William Matthews Associates for English Heritage and provides level access to Tintagel Castle. It comprises two cantilevers with a gap in the middle to allow for expansion.

This year's prize will be judged by Stephen Bayley (Hon FRIBA), chairman of the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust and one of Britain's foremost design critics. The winners will be announced at a ceremony in London in November.

Is this the finest view in Central London? Developers Northacre certainly think so. The Broadway, Orchard Place, SW1, is a mixed-use development that comprises six towers in the heart of Westminster and offers 258 apartments, of which 70 remain. The highlight is the Minotti London apartment, with 4,672sq ft of space, four bedrooms and this striking view (www.orchardplace.london)

Hammer's up for high-value properties

PROPERTY auctions are no longer merely for derelict buildings and 'fixer-uppers', as new data suggests that online property auctions are breaking new records. In particular, there has been a 100% increase in the number of million-pound properties selling at auction, with the majority of them in the South of England.

The data has been compiled by Iamsold, the UK's largest residential property auctioneer. The firm claims that auctions are proving to be increasingly popular due to the speed at which properties go from offers being accepted to a sale being completed. Figures from Rightmove suggest that the traditional method takes about 150 days on average, whereas Iamsold's data says that the time from the hammer coming down to completion is only 56 days.

In 2022, 70% of houses put up for auction with the firm sold for their reserve price or more.

'There's no question that high-value homes are hot property and the competitive nature of online auction is helping to drive up prices and get sales completed quickly,' says Iamsold co-founder Jamie Cooke.

'Any kind of property could be a strong candidate for auction, however. It all comes down to the circumstances of the seller and whether or not they want a quick and secure sale, but who wouldn't?' →

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1. Alliance Trust conducted a survey via Opinium Research, January 2022.
2. The Profit from Patience Report, Alliance Trust, September 2022 alliancetrust.co.uk/patience

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Prime time for the country

EARLY indications for the prime country market in 2023 are looking good, say Savills, after 2022 saw an increase in sales of prime country houses and estates. The agents say that, for homes and estates valued at more than £5 million, sales were up by 32% compared with 2021, whereas those properties valued at £10 million or higher saw an increase of 23% compared with 2021. At the very top end of the market (£20 million or more), there was a 118% increase in transactions between 2021 and 2022. A driving factor for this was a significant increase in international buyers compared with 2021, as overseas travel became easier and the strength of the US dollar offered value for dollar-denominated buyers.

Early indications suggest that momentum will be maintained, Savills say, revealing that, at the end of January, the agents had registered the highest number of buyers looking for £5 million-plus homes since analysis began in 2018, with an increase of 8% compared with 2022.

'So far this year, there are clear indicators that these transaction volumes are continuing, with some significant exchanges at the top end of the market,' says Crispin Holborow, country director of The Private Office at Savills. 'If trading volumes continue at this level, we could see another period of price strengthening in the market as supply once again dips against demand.

'The positive uptick in new registration numbers recorded during January for top-end country property is likely to add further momentum to the market. For potential buyers with a sense that the prime country property market could offer some opportunities following a few years of unprecedented demand and rising values, the reality could be quite different as the year goes on.'

Moving questions

WHY do we move? This is the question considered by agents Strutt & Parker, who have analysed 10 years of data from their Housing Futures research to track and identify the changing preferences of buyers and sellers.

Health has become increasingly important for respondents, climbing from 11th to fifth, with most of that change in preference occurring in the past two years. The agents say that the health concerns of the pandemic are still fresh in people's minds, whether it's physical or mental health, and 70% of respondents said wellbeing was 'an important motivation in moving', compared with only 29% a decade ago. A preference for improved health remains consistent across age groups, whereas respondents also noted concerns about air pollution that were not prevalent 10 years ago.

Financial preferences have also changed dramatically, say the agents, noting that an increase in house prices overall, as well as price-to-earnings ratio (PTER), are now a significant factor in where and why people choose to move. In England, the PTER has risen from 6.76 in 2012 to 8.93 in 2021, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This means that the average cost of a home in the nation is now almost nine times the average annual earnings. London and the East of England have seen the largest increase by region, rising by 4.44 and 3.26 respectively.

The two biggest fallers over the past 10 years are a desire for a smaller home and smaller plot, falling to 14th and 16th most important, respectively. There could be a few reasons for this, say Strutt & Parker, with downsizing becoming less of a priority due to the rising costs of moving, the need to look after children or extended family for longer or the lack of appropriate housing options. The agents also added that a desire for outdoor space featured highly in other parts of the survey, with more than 50% of those surveyed saying outside space will benefit their mental health.

Some things never change, however, with privacy and access to shops and amenities retaining the top two spots. 'Whether it's a flat, bungalow, detached cottage or townhouse that people are looking to move to, it's clear we don't like to be overlooked or overheard—and vice versa,' says Matt Henderson, associate director at Strutt & Parker Research. Thankfully, despite the turmoil of the past 10 years, 'with general elections, Brexit and, more latterly, Trussonomics', political climate has remained last or second last in respondents' motivation of importance.

Alamy; Taran Wilkhu

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Hit a home run

In a tricky market, property buying agents can help you not only find the best properties, many of which are only available privately, but also secure them at the right price

Heaton and Partners

Since opening their doors in 2013, Heaton & Partners has grown to become the pre-eminent independent firm of buying agents operating throughout the South of England, including London. Their highly experienced team provides property search and buying advice to clients with budgets from under £1 million to more than £100 million. The company has an unrivalled track record and leaves no stone unturned when it comes to finding the perfect property. The team works with utmost discretion throughout the entire process, with service excellence at the heart of everything it does. This perhaps explains why former clients are the firm's biggest advocates, according to founder Ed Heaton.
(01635 887340; www.heatonpartners.com)

Prime Purchase

Giving clients a clear advantage since 2002, Prime Purchase represents buyers acquiring the finest homes and estates in London and across the country. The highly experienced team acts in the best interests of clients, providing discreet and impartial advice. Prime Purchase uses its detailed local knowledge of the market to unearth opportunities that buyers would not come across without its assistance, as well as managing the negotiation process to ensure the client comes out on top. The company offers unrivalled access to properties both off and on the market, focusing on only a select number of clients at any one time.
(07500 818272; www.prime-purchase.com)

Francis Long of Hanslips

Hanslips gives buyers a clear advantage in the marketplace by providing them with full information on what's available and expert judgement of the price that might be achieved for the right house. The world of property is very rarely what it seems. However hard you look, many of the best properties available are sold without ever reaching the public domain. The smartest buyers invest in a specialist agent who sees the whole picture, not the picture that sellers want you to see. Hanslips is independent and acts exclusively for buyers, so there is never a conflict of interest. The company covers London, south-eastern England, central southern England and the Cotswolds.
(07884 437209; www.hanslips.com)

Domus Holmes Property Finder

Domus Holmes is an independent buying agency providing a comprehensive search and acquisition service to private clients looking to buy a property in Bristol, Bath, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and the Cotswolds. Established by Claire Russell-Lartaud, a property lawyer, and Jerome Lartaud, a property investor and developer, the company exclusively represents buyers, offering clients unrivalled access to properties—both those publicly marketed and the ones that are not. Domus Holmes's full end-to-end service covers every aspect of the property-buying process, from consultation to search, shortlist, due diligence, inspection and viewings, negotiation and conveyancing management through to completion.
(0117 973 3683; www.domusholmes.co.uk)

AWS Prime Property

AWS Prime Property is an expert property consultancy based in Knightsbridge, encompassing search, acquisition and development. It guides clients through the complex and competitive prime London market, saving them time, sourcing the finest and rarest properties and negotiating the best terms for them. The majority of the acquisitions are conducted entirely off-market, sourced from the firm's enviable black book. Founder Alex Woodleigh-Smith comments: 'For most of our clients, their time is simply too valuable to spend trawling websites and fielding calls from agents. We properly research each search, previewing an average of 50 properties per client. Only the very best reach our shortlists.' *(020–7385 7049; www.awsprime.com)*

Aykroyd & Co

Aykroyd & Co is an independent property advisory firm focusing solely on protecting buyers' interests when purchasing homes in central London and the south-western boroughs. Hannah Aykroyd and the team are trusted by their clients and act with the utmost discretion. The team's extensive network results in nearly 80% of properties being acquired off-market. A huge part of the offering is undertaking in-depth analysis on pricing and carrying out the vital due diligence to provide each client with the confidence to commit to such an important purchase. Attention to detail and understanding the nuances of the conveyancing process ensures a high success rate to achieve the best result for every client. *(020–3034 0078; www.aykroydco.com)*

Rowallan Exclusive Property Buying Agents

Jason Corbett founded Rowallan Exclusive Property Buying Agents after 35 years of working in the property market for both buyers and sellers. Having worked in many parts of the UK for some of the world's largest real-estate companies and being regularly featured on television, his understanding of the UK property market is second to none. With a solid working knowledge of London and the Home Counties, personal ties and contacts throughout much of the rest of the country, Mr Corbett's enviable experience really does open doors for his clients. His bespoke care, attention and dedication to each individual client are all at the forefront of his success. *(07910 395419; www.rowallanbuyingagents.com)*

Stroud Fuller & Lurot

Having been nominated by Spear's Wealth Magazine as one of the capital's top 10 buying agents for the third year in a row, Alex Stroud enjoys an unrivalled position at the highest end of the London property market. Having worked on his own from 2010, last year he joined forces with fellow agent Johnny Fuller to create 'possibly the most experienced, knowledgeable and well-respected pairing currently operating in the central London market'. The firm has been an extraordinary success, having acquired and sold a vast list of properties, mostly off-market. This self-described workaholic, known for his discretion, charm and patience, is legendary and this has given him the status of 'the man to go to'. *(07584 038000; www.stroudandfuller.com)*

Rose Captial Property Consultancy

Jessica Parkinson, founder of Rose Capital Property Consultancy and RICS chartered surveyor, has more than 15 years' experience sourcing the finest properties in London for an elite client list. Specialising in helping families find homes and second properties, she only represents buyers and runs a truly bespoke, personal service, handling a small number of clients at any one time. Assisting you every step of the way, from assessing your requirements and negotiating the best terms to turning the key for the first time, Rose Capital has a tenacious approach that leaves no stone unturned and will put you in the best possible position to acquire your dream property. *(07841 997100; www.rosecapitalpropertyconsultancy.com)*

Rare brilliance

Ven House, Milborne Port, Somerset
The home of Mike Fisher and Charles Allen, the Lord Allen of Kensington

There are few more beautiful houses in the South-West than Ven. But its formal gardens are in some ways even more remarkable, representing an extremely rare survival from the English Baroque. **Christopher Stocks** delves into their long and fascinating history

Photographs by Clive Nichols

VEN, near Milborne Port, Somerset, has to be one of the most romantic houses in England. Begun in about 1700 and extended in the reign of George I, it remained in the same family until 1957, at which point it seemed to be in terminal decline, before being rescued in the 1980s and magnificently restored. It was built for James Medlycott, an ambitious London lawyer who bought the manor and its existing farmhouse mainly, it would seem, as an easy route into political power: Milborne Port was a classic rotten borough, fielding two MPs despite its diminutive size, and, after showering the local people with cash, Medlycott was duly returned to Parliament in 1710.

In 1725, presumably to underline his upgraded social status, he commissioned the Wincanton architect Nathaniel Ireson to enlarge the original house. Ireson and Medlycott may have taken their inspiration from the London home of the 1st Duke of Buckingham and Normanby, which had been built some 20 years earlier. Designed by William Winde on a prominent site overlooking St James's Park, Buckingham House is now rather better known as Buckingham Palace, having since been aggrandised beyond all recognition by John Nash and Sir Aston Webb.

> 'Heritage pears are trained over a 100ft-long pear tunnel'

The new, improved Ven needed a suitably smart new setting, so Medlycott engaged the services of a landscape architect to remodel its grounds. The design is generally attributed to Richard Grange, whose name appears on a series of plans that have recently returned to Ven, although there are some doubts about the attribution: Grange is otherwise unknown to history and the plans are dated 1739, some eight years after Medlycott's death.

Yet, whoever the designer was, the result was a masterpiece of the English Baroque and what makes Ven so special is that many of its features can still be seen 350 years later, making it one of the most complete early-18th-century gardens in the country. It's a remarkably rare survival.

The 1739 master plan shows the house at the centre of a series of formal gardens, approached from the north by a short, straight entrance drive that runs between narrow canals. To the east is a service yard, with two rectangular enclosures beyond it, containing an orchard and the kitchen garden. To the south,

Preceding pages: **Alliums and peonies in the walled garden with Ven House behind.** *Above:* ***Rosa*** **'Constance Spry' and** ***Nepeta*** **'Six Hills Giant' with the orangery beyond**

Above: **The restored kitchen garden is now run under a no-dig regime.** *Below:* **Peonies in the abundant cutting garden, which is once again producing flowers for the house**

a raised terrace with brick pavilions at either end overlooks a sunken parterre with a central canal, as, to the west, the designs shade off into informality, with a series of shrubberies and wildernesses to screen the outskirts of Milborne Port. Water plays an important part in the plan, with ornamental pools immediately west of the house and another large canal in the south-west corner of the park, but the most delightful feature is the clear stream that emerges from beneath the southern terrace of the house, which flows smoothly on today. Its original function isn't clear, other than as an attractive novelty, although it has been suggested it helped cool the cellars.

These complex and sophisticated designs must have cost Medlycott a pretty penny, on top of the vast expenditure he laid out on the house, but he was not to enjoy the fruits of his success for long. Echoing many an ambitious man before and since, he ended up overextending himself and, in 1731, died bankrupt.

Luckily for Ven, his descendants managed to hang on, settling down to the comfortable life of country squires. A century later, in 1835, Sir William Medlycott engaged Decimus Burton, architect of the Wellington Arch and the Temperate House at Kew, to modernise the house. He also made some changes to the gardens, removing the terrace pavilions and replacing them with a broad flight of steps at one end and a tall conservatory at the other, as well as adding new courtyards on either side. By this time, most of the complex Baroque water features shown in the Grange plans seem to have been modified or lost, although the documentary evidence is thin. Burton retained the stream beneath the terrace, but extended the culvert it runs in well beyond his wide new steps, muting the impact of its re-emergence by the wall of the kitchen garden.

In October 1898, Ven was one of the first country houses to be featured in the pages of an influential new magazine. COUNTRY LIFE had been founded by Edward Hudson only →

a year previously and was still finding its feet when its (anonymous) writer visited Ven. The article focused on the gardens, describing them as 'in character appropriate to the house. Near it they have a certain classic formality. At a little distance the regular lines give place to the features of a more picturesque style, and the grounds approach to native simplicity'.

COUNTRY LIFE visited Ven for a second time in 1907, describing house and gardens in much more detail. The feature, by the architectural historian Henry Avray Tipping, marked the first realisation of how rare a survival the gardens were, but also caught Ven near the end of its nearly 200-year run as the Medlycott seat. Agricultural depression, the introduction of death duties and steep rises in income tax had all eaten into long-settled fortunes, before the First World War struck the final blow for many county families.

In 1916, the Revd Sir Hubert Medlycott moved to Sandford Orcas and started selling off parcels of the estate, a process continued by his son. Ven's decline accelerated during the Second World War, when, as were so many country houses, it was requisitioned, in Ven's case as a boys' school. The boys evidently

Top: ***Cornus kousa*** **in flower by the balustrade overlooking the formal garden.** *Above:* **'At a little distance the regular lines give place to the features of a more picturesque style, and the grounds approach to native simplicity,' commented COUNTRY LIFE in an 1898 article**

The sunken parterre appears on the 1739 master plan of Ven. The broad steps were added by Decimus Burton in the 19th century

had the run of the park, playing football on a pitch covered in cowpats and attempting to dig out part of the river to form a swimming pond. Left empty after the war, Ven was put up for sale in 1957, and a succession of new owners followed, none of whom seem to have had the means or the mettle to tackle a large country house and what was left of the estate. By the late 1980s, Ven's grounds were in a sorry state: long gone were the herbaceous borders and the gravelled paths; the huge stone slabs on the terrace were cracked and the balustrade had lost some of its Coade stone urns.

Luckily for Ven, a saviour was about to ride to its rescue, in the larger-than-life character of Tommy Kyle, an American adventurer with an intriguing past and several big house projects already under his belt. After seeing it advertised in COUNTRY LIFE, he bought Ven in 1991. Over the next three years, he and his partner, Jerome Murray, spent a fortune upgrading and redecorating the house and grounds, using Richard Grange's plans to re-create the sunken and kitchen gardens, as well as refashioning the lake and planting hundreds of trees. By 1999, however, Mr Kyle had found another house to restore and Ven was sold again.

Two owners followed in relatively quick succession, then, in 2007, Ven was bought by the fashion designer Jasper Conran, who offered Mr Kyle his thanks for 'bequeathing a fabulous semi-mature garden that I could bend slightly to my will'. Mr Conran added his own stamp to both the house and grounds, adding a swimming pool in the kitchen garden, but removing the tennis court, noting waspishly that 'This is Somerset, not Wimbledon.' As he told the garden designer Tania Compton for her 2015 book *The Private Gardens of England*, his aim at Ven was 'to make it into a gentler, more romantic place than the one it had become'. He filled the conservatory with jasmine and paulownias so that their scent wafted through the house, and introduced towering New Zealand tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) to the orangery. Like Mr Kyle, however, when it came to houses Mr Conran had a wandering eye, and, in 2015, it was back on the market yet again.

> 'A saviour was about to ride to its rescue, a larger-than-life American adventurer'

Ven's current owners are Mike Fisher, architect and founder of the prodigiously successful international design company Studio Indigo, and Charles Allen, The Lord Allen of Kensington, former chief executive of Granada Television and ITV and chairman of Global Radio. Mr Fisher refers to Ven as: 'My salvation. It's a reason for working as hard as we do.' Since their arrival, he has restored and redecorated the house from basement to attic, but he is a keen gardener, too. With the help of James Foster-Pegg and Kay Brewer of Howell Landscaping, all the outgrown borders have been refreshed and the kitchen garden has been converted to a no-dig system. The orchard has also been upgraded, with grand new iron-framed fruit cages and hundreds of extra fruit trees and bushes, plus numerous heritage varieties of pears, trained over a 100ft-long pear tunnel.

For the future, Mr Fisher has commissioned the garden designer Iain MacDonald to completely refashion the west courtyard; originally laid out for Mr Kyle as a white garden, its box parterres were already suffering badly from blight in Mr Conran's time, so this area is ripe for redevelopment.

After a long decline, it's exciting to see how these remarkable gardens have been brought back into such fine fettle and it's to be hoped that their future continues to be as bright. Mr Fisher certainly feels a strong sense of commitment to Ven and its gardens. 'Houses like Ven need to be used and to be part of the community. Ven has been an important part of village life for 300 years and we want to maintain that.' It's a sentiment that the Medlycotts surely would have seconded.

Anna Pavord

The first unfurling

I NEVER quite remember how glorious it is going to be, that first day in spring when I can stay out all day in the garden, not doing anything unpleasant such as pruning roses, but simply fiddling about—a bit of weeding, a bit of tying in, but mostly just wandering, fitting myself back into the plot. It's like being at a party, where people you haven't seen for ages suddenly loom into view. Meeting them again, you remember why you liked their company. The equivalent of the party pooper is bittercress, pushing in round a juicy peony where it's not wanted.

Pink *Tulipa bakeri* is one of the first tulips to flower in the garden, on the heels of the early crocus

By early spring, the bank, rising from the yard by the house, is on the move. There's a lot of small stuff, snuffling about, low down, and I'll get round to admiring that, later on. But, at this particular moment, my eye goes straight to the glorious bubbling mound of giant fennel, *Ferula communis*.

It's a cousin of the culinary fennel, but much more dramatic. I saw it first in eastern Turkey, where it erupts from the brown hillsides with an exuberance very much at odds with its surroundings. In our garden, it starts into growth ludicrously early, producing filigree fronds of a brilliant, hopeful green. Sometimes, a sharp frost lays a frond on the ground. But undaunted, it simply presents more feathery stems from the centre of the clump. It's a glorious thing and, later on in spring, it (and half a dozen more) provides the best possible background to the tulips planted randomly up the slope.

At this time of the year, when the landscape around is still mostly brown, green in the garden is especially important. In building up pleasing groups of plants, leaves are much more important than flowers. Flowers are the icing on the cake, looking good on Instagram, but foliage provides the substance, the lushness, the generosity you want in a garden. After I've paid full homage to the fennel, therefore, my eye moves on to the polished leaves of the arum growing not far from it. This is *Arum creticum*, with leaves larger than our native wild arum, but of the same arresting arrow shape. By early spring, the first furled spathes push through the foliage, pale cream gradually opening to show off the brilliant-yellow spadix within. The spathes are the same colour as the primroses that crowd round it.

Primroses don't release their scent on the air in the way that, for instance, daphnes do. You have to go nose to nose with a primrose, whereas *Daphne* 'Jacqueline Postill' at the top of the bank recklessly sends scent all over the garden. I don't try to find words for it. I simply shut my eyes and let it swirl around me, listening to the rooks clattering in the valley below.

> 'Plants often have ideas much better than my own'

My three favourite herbaceous plants, spurges, thalictrums and monkshoods, don't have scent, but are favourites because they all have leaves that are every bit as important as their flowers. The spurge that dominates on the bank is the big *Euphorbia characias*. There are quite a lot of them, named varieties once perhaps, but self-seeded now. I'm very relaxed about self-seeding because plants often have ideas much better than my own. And if some spurges turn out to be poor specimens, I can always heave them out. Which I do. By this stage in the year, the stems that are going to flower have crooked their heads over and the clump begins to look like a flock of questing chickens. The wonderful chartreuse colour is showing already, but they develop slowly, always an advantage in a plant. Underneath are carpets of self-seeded love-in-a-mist. Species tulips such as pink *T. bakeri* and *T. humilis* are always the first into flower here, taking over from early crocus.

A couple of seasons ago, I fell for a spurge called 'Portuguese Velvet'. It had glorious, velvety foliage and, so I read, a more compact habit than most types of *E. characias*. But now, the only leaves it has hang limply round the top of naked stems. Worse still, there are no new shoots springing from the base, which is what makes this tribe so useful in mixed plantings. Usually, you can cut out straggly old stems knowing they'll be replaced each season by sprightly new ones. Gardening friends told me that 'Portuguese Velvet' liked full sun and good drainage. It's got both of those. So what is it waiting for? A swig of old tawny?

The Seasonal Gardener by Anna Pavord, published by Phaidon, is out now

Next week Blackcurrants

Horticultural aide-mémoire

Plant asparagus

Asparagus is an appealing vegetable to grow, perennial and not difficult. It has a distinctive character and rewards abundantly those of infinite patience. Remove the spider-like young plants from their box. Shovel out a shallow trench, set the soil aside and raise a shallow ridge along the centre of the trench. Place each plant at intervals along this ridge, spreading the roots with care. Replace the topsoil over the roots and firm gently with the head of a rake, lightly removing the imprint. Now go and occupy yourself with something else for the next three years. **SCD**

Alamy

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Kitchen garden cook Spring cabbage

by Melanie Johnson

Spring cabbage with roasted garlic and meatballs

Method

- Preheat your oven to 180˚C/350˚F/gas mark 4.
- Wrap the whole garlic bulb in foil and roast it in the oven for 45 minutes.
- On a large baking tray, arrange the spring cabbage, cut sides up, together with the sliced red pepper, diced aubergine, chopped leeks, sun-blushed tomatoes and meatballs. Pour over the olive oil and toss everything to coat.
- In a small bowl, combine the breadcrumbs and herbs and then scatter the mixture over the quartered cabbage pieces to give them a crisp texture. Place the tray in the oven for 45 minutes.
- Slice the garlic bulb across and squeeze the roasted garlic cloves into a bowl. Mash them with a fork and then mix in the Greek yoghurt and lemon juice.
- To serve, add a dollop of the garlicky yoghurt to each plate and spread it out, then spoon everything from the roasting tray on top. Add an extra drizzle of harissa to spice it up.

Ingredients

Serves 4

1 garlic bulb
1 spring cabbage, quartered
1 red pepper, sliced
1 aubergine, cut into bite-size chunks
1 leek, washed, trimmed and cut into thick coins
200g sun-blushed tomatoes
24 meatballs (depending on size)
100ml olive oil
50g panko breadcrumbs
3 sprigs rosemary, finely chopped
3 sprigs thyme, chopped
200ml Greek yoghurt
1 lemon, juice of
2tbspn harissa

> ‘Tender spring cabbage offers the first taste of the new season’s brassicas’

More ways with Spring cabbage

Lunch for one: spring-cabbage fritters with gochujang (Korean chilli paste)

Thinly slice into ribbons one-quarter of a spring cabbage. Add one egg, three tablespoons of plain flour, a small handful of fresh chopped herbs, such as parsley, one tablespoon of gochujang and season well. Mix everything together. Heat a splash of oil in a frying pan and add three mounds of the cabbage. Fry until golden, then turn over and cook for only a few minutes. Place on a plate and scatter with more herbs and serve with lemon and soured cream on the side. This recipe can easily be doubled, tripled or quadrupled to use a whole cabbage, which will serve four.

Irish colcannon

Add 1kg of potatoes to cold water and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15–20 minutes or until just cooked. Add 100g of butter to a frying pan, together with three thinly sliced spring onions and a whole thinly sliced spring cabbage, then cook for a few minutes to soften. Mash the potatoes and add the buttery cabbage mixture. Pour in milk to reach the consistency you like, roughly 100ml, season and add a splash of cream if you want to be indulgent.

Melanie Johnson

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It's only natural

Inspired by the crystal-clear swimming lakes of Austria and Germany, natural swimming pools are making more of a splash here than ever, says **Anna Tyzack**

WHEN Pete Boyle and his wife, Ciara Denvir, bought crumbling Ormiston House, outside Belfast, in 2014, they had no plans to reinstate the derelict three-quarter Olympic-size swimming pool—it was too much of a money pit. Instead, Mr Boyle tried to forget about the pool and focus on a different plan: creating a natural swimming pond to enjoy with his children. Yet, when Andrew Cox of natural-pool company Origin Aqua visited the house, which once belonged to shipbuilder Sir Edward Harland, he took one look at the enormous area and suggested they transform it into a natural swimming pool. 'We didn't know such a thing existed, but we've never looked back,' Mr Boyle enthuses. 'It's a delightfully pure swimming experience, rather like diving into an Alpine lake, as there are no chemicals or salt.'

Natural swimming ponds first became fashionable in Britain about 12 years ago, inspired by the crystal-clear swimming lakes of Austria and Germany. 'They look low-key, but they have a liner and a pump and regeneration zone filled with beautiful aquatic plants and reeds to absorb phosphorous, leaving nothing for algae to grow on,' explains Sarah Murch of Ellicar Gardens and Pools, whose own 3,229sq ft (300sq m) swimming pond with Austrian filtration system in her South Yorkshire garden inspired her to set up a natural-pool business more than 10 years ago. Over the past three or four years, however, the natural-pool market has evolved considerably, she explains; with cutting-edge natural filtration technology by companies such as Origin Aqua and Biotop, homeowners can now choose between installing a swimming pond or a 'living pool', which resembles a standard chemical pool, yet has a natural filter. 'They look very sleek and don't need any planted regeneration zones because they have a filter box,' notes Miss Murch. 'They can also be heated up to 28°C using a heat pump.'

It was the Ormiston pool that inspired Mr Cox, who studied engineering at university before founding natural-swimming company Clear Water Revival, to turn his mind to creating 'proper' pools. Demand for his ponds was growing steadily, as more people opted for a chlorine-free approach, yet not all his clients liked the idea of swimming among newts and toads and would ideally have preferred the crisp lines and turquoise water of a rectangular swimming pool. As he gazed at the Ormiston pool, he was certain that similar natural filtration technology could purify a standard pool. 'I grew up wild swimming on a farm and know how much more refreshing it is to swim in chemical-free water. I went back to the drawing board and designed a natural filtration system that could work in all bodies of water; indoor, outdoor and swimming ponds, plus existing swimming pools,' he says. 'People pay a fortune to drink purified water; why wouldn't you want to swim in it?'

> 'It's a delightfully pure swimming experience, rather like diving into an Alpine lake'

At 35m by 15m (about 115ft by 50ft), the Ormiston pool, which was restored in 2016, is the largest natural swimming pool in the UK, a fact that amuses Mr Boyle's wife, who always jokes that her husband bought a swimming pool with a house thrown in. Cherished by family and the local community, which uses it for kayaking lessons, the pool now sits inside a majestic stone-built pavilion and is heated using biomass and solar panels, enabling it to be used year round. 'It's a big beast of a pool containing 750,000 litres [165,000 gallons] of water, but it's never turned green and the running costs are one-third of those of a chlorine pool,' Mr Boyle explains.

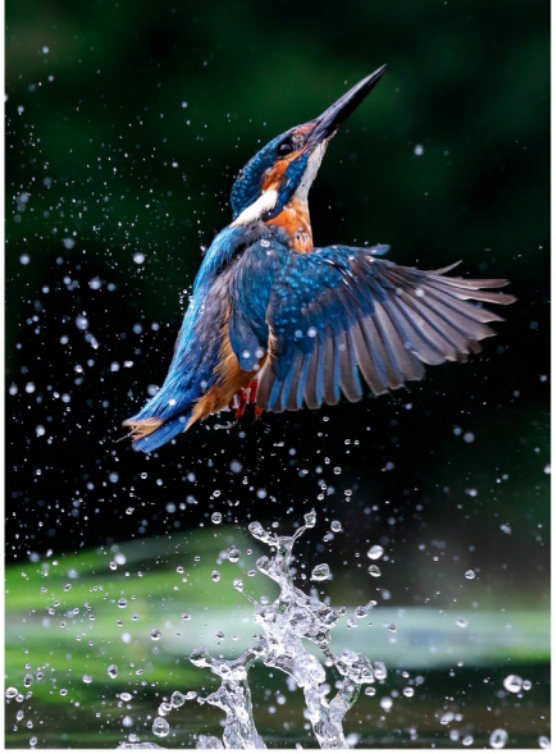
Mr Cox developed his Origin Aqua filter system together with scientists at Cranfield University and UWE; it's now been installed in more than 100 pools in the UK and abroad. Rather than working to kill all bacteria, as chemical pools do, the system manages pathogens to safe levels, after which the water is mineralised →

Preceding pages and right: **Natural swimming pools designed and constructed by Ellicar**

Making a splash

A natural pool costs much the same as its chemical equivalent: a tiled 12m by 5m (39½ft by 16½ft) rectangular natural pool with an automated cover will set you back between £160,000 and £220,000, including the mineral biome filter. A smaller, one-piece pool comes in at £70,000 to £110,000, depending on the specification.

A professionally installed swimming pond containing aquatic plants tends to cost between £120,000 and £200,000 including filters, due to the high construction costs of creating a 50:50 swimming-pool to reed-bed ratio, although you can create them more cheaply by following DIY instructions. Meanwhile, retrofitting an existing swimming pool with the Origin Aqua system currently costs about £24,000 (10%–20% of the value of a new pool). Adding it to a pond costs slightly more, due to the drainage and intensive cleaning required.



Wild water: natural swimming pools can play host to flora and fauna, such as (*from left*) white water lilies, kingfishers and pickerel weed

to replicate the health benefits of thermal spa water. Part of the joy of natural filtration systems, such as Origin Aqua and Biotop, an Austrian brand, is that they can be retrofitted in existing swimming pools and ponds. Miss Murch has recently upgraded a 12-year-old swimming pond with a below-deck Biotop filter and Mr Cox has successfully retrofitted chemical swimming pools with his system. He believes chlorine is not necessary for private pools and that, in the future, all swimming pools will be run on natural systems. His company is looking at using the technology on a far bigger scale, to reduce the phosphate run-offs polluting our rivers and streams and to help make water safer in developing countries.

Yet, despite the growing market for chic natural pools, Miss Murch is more excited about swimming ponds. 'If you have a rectangular pool, you don't admire the water, as you have to keep it covered when you're not using it to retain heat; you also have to keep it cleaner, as its stark lines are less forgiving,' she cautions. 'A pond is not only about swimming, it's a lifestyle in itself. The plants, the wildlife, the beauty of the setting draws you to the water and the temperature remains ambient due to the natural thermal gain in the water even if it's uncovered, which means the swimming season is longer.' The most modern swimming ponds now have built-in robots, to ensure there is no hint of sliminess on the bottom of the liner, together with sloping concrete-free sides, to ensure they are even kinder on the environment. Mini plunge ponds are also becoming more popular, Miss Murch says, with micro filters and resistance jets. 'My pond does get a bit nippy in winter, but I'll still get in the shallow end and do a quick lap,' she says.

As swimming ponds are often a passion, there is also a flourishing DIY market. Gregory Page-Turner from Devon managed the installation of his own 150,000-litre (about 33,000-gallon) natural swimming pond at his family home, Woodhayes, two years ago and his children now enjoy a perfectly transparent pool with a diving platform, surrounded by water lilies and reeds. By using a local digger driver and buying substrate, chippings, sand and land drains from a nearby merchant, he managed to keep the cost to a little over £15,000.

> 'You go "wow" every time you get in and you emerge feeling completely cleansed'

'David Pagan Butler gave me a three-hour tutorial and I watched all his videos,' Mr Page-Turner explains. 'The water is circulated through the aquatic plant roots using a 50-watt air compressor pump, the kind used in sewage treatment plants, which doesn't cost much to run. Beneath the planted zone is a series of six 12-metre (39½ft) coils of perforated land drain connecting to six pipe outlets, which each contain an air ball connected to the air compressor; they displace water through the substrate and pull the nitrates present in the water into the plants, oxygenating the water at the same time.'

He dismisses any suggestion that the pond might become more difficult to manage as anaerobic sediment builds up; he regularly removes leaves from the surface to prevent nitrates entering the water and controls the reed bed, making sure the oxygenating plants stay in the bed, rather than spreading into the swimming area, and, once a year, he removes all the debris from the bottom using a hoover. 'The only mistake I made was to put in plants that were too small—the dogs and children trashed them. I had to return to Dorset Water Lily Company and buy larger varieties,' he admits. 'It's wonderful not spending money on filtration and chlorine. The water feels very pure to swim in and there's so much Nature: dragonflies, damselflies, kingfishers—they all come to you.' The swimming experience isn't too wild, however, he insists; there are no fish or eels to tickle your toes, because they would excrete in the water: 'There are only a few frogs and newts and we keep finding aquatic snails.'

Although Miss Murch is convinced that a professionally constructed pond will function effectively for longer with less maintenance, she supports the DIY market, as it encourages innovation and makes the natural swimming experience more accessible. Whether it's a natural pond or pool, every generation can enjoy them, she says. 'They bring so much in terms of lifestyle; you go "wow" every time you get in and you emerge feeling completely cleansed, which is extremely addictive.'

In at the deep end: natural-pool contacts

- Origin Aqua, Wickwar, Gloucestershire (0330 128 9885; www.origin-aqua.com)
- Ellicar Gardens and Pools, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire (01777 933108; www.ellicar.co.uk)
- Biotop, Weidling, Austria (00 43 22 433 0406; https://gb.bio.top)
- Clear Water Revival, Bristol (0117–923 2588; www.clear-water-revival.com)

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Faithful and fearless to the last

From the lifelike painting of majestic otterhound Brizo to Queen Victoria's affectionate portrait of her beloved dachshund, Waldmann, we've long turned to art to celebrate our cherished canine companions, says **Matthew Dennison**

An irascible Samuel Pepys was unimpressed by proceedings in the Council Chamber at Whitehall in September 1667. Charles II, Pepys noted, was distracted. 'All I observed… is the silliness of the King, playing with his dog all the while, and not minding the business, and what he said was mighty weak.' Evidently, the pleasure-loving monarch struggled to absorb himself in Alderman Barker's complaints about the Council of Ireland, preferring instead to stroke his spaniel as his mind wandered.

Which dog lover among us fails to sympathise with Charles? The King's view was almost certainly akin to that of French naturalist the Comte de Buffon. In his *Natural History* of 1755, Buffon celebrated canine elegance and good nature: 'The dog, independent of the beauty of his figure, his strength, vivacity, and nimbleness, possesses every internal excellence which can attract the regard of man.'

For centuries, men and women have identified 'internal excellences' in their dogs. At one time or another, every puppy owner has shared the young Queen Victoria's reaction to her newest Skye terrier, Islay, whom she described on March 13, 1839, as 'so gentle, so good natured, and friendly and so funny'. Our dogs, we know, offer us the same sweet temper and unquestioning loyalty that a dying Argus once showed Odysseus or that Greyfriars Bobby paid to the memory of his former owner John Gray, keeping vigil on his grave: their affection is unquestioning and unflagging. 'Faithful and Fearless', a sumptuous new exhibition at the Wallace Collection, explores this loving relationship between owner and dog in a series of canine paintings, sculptures and even stuffed specimens. Visually magnificent and unashamedly celebratory, it offers visitors an inspiring fillip.

In Britain, dog portraiture experienced a boom in the second half of the 19th century. Thanks to royal patronage of artists, including Landseer, the development of new breeds and increasingly standardised breed characteristics, canine imagery emerged from the shadow of sporting art and an 18th-century tradition that had focused on the prowess of working dogs in the hunting field. Yet, as the current exhibition makes clear, the impulse to celebrate our relationships with our dogs was anything but a Victorian phenomenon. Long before an affluent 19th-century middle class democratised pet ownership, artists and patrons sought to preserve dogs' myriad qualities in two- and three-dimensional imagery. Movingly, the Roman sculptor responsible for the first-century Townley Greyhounds recognised dogs' affectionate nature. In his hands, the gentle ministrations of the hound bitch to her companion are captured without →

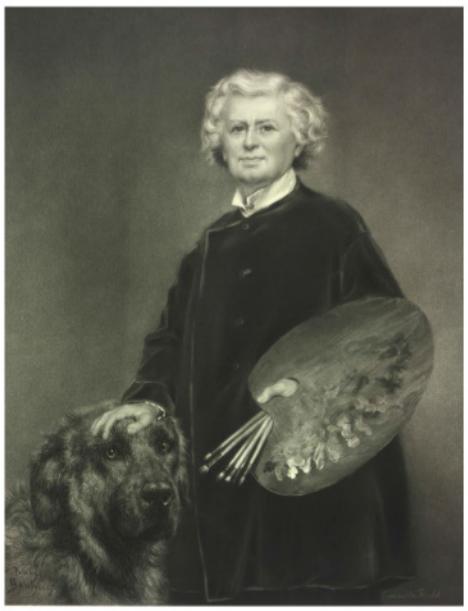
Pre-eminent canine artist Landseer's work included the allegorical satire *Trial by Jury* (*facing page*) and royal commissions, such as *Queen Victoria's Spaniel Tilco* (*above*)

sentiment. Across millennia, they convey the loving tenderness even of hunters, that 'internal excellence' Buffon identified as winning human hearts is embodied in cloud-coloured marble, a paw laid gently on a smooth-coated shoulder, an expression of doting absorption on the part of the crouching hound.

> 'The dog, independent of his beauty... possesses every internal excellence to attract the regard of man'

This emotional punch is at the heart of 'Faithful and Fearless'. The exhibition does not attempt a history of dogs in art. Instead, it focuses on the emotional bond between owners and their pets and artistic endeavours to capture this. Although every exhibit is from a British collection, their provenances are wide-ranging—just as the impulse to anthropomorphise our pets extends beyond these islands' shores. What unites all these images is human absence. Remarkably, time and again, affection between owner and dog emerges in paintings and sculptures that exclude the pet owner. Even stuffed specimens convey the pride of former masters in their dogs—in this case, a Pekinese called Ah Cum, stuffed in 1905 and in life described as 'beautiful in colour and carriage', a very model of everything Pekineses would become in the hands of British breeders, and a fluffy white spaniel called Minnie. Few souvenirs of lost pets convey more movingly the strength of affection between owner and dog than Minnie. On a smartly braided cushion, the bouffant lap dog reclines, on her face an expression of lasting attentiveness. She is housed in a curly, glass-fronted Tunbridge Ware case, partly lined with artificial flowers, a kitschly beautiful treatment that fetishises Minnie, recalling both Victorian fairgrounds and the jewelled relics of saints in Baroque churches. Beyond the silk roses and the marquetry butterflies, however, what survives is the expression of Minnie's bright button eyes. They tell a simple and unchanging story of love given and reciprocated.

John Charlton's *Portrait of Pilu, a Performing Dog*, 1910, a canine mathematical genius



Painting the bond: Rosa Bonheur's portrait of her splendid French otterhound Brizo (*right*) is powerful in its noble simplicity. Her affection for her dogs never wavered (*left*)

Repeatedly, exhibits capture this dewy twinkle, from John Charlton's glowing small portrait of 1910 of a cross-breed terrier called Pilu, once famous for the ability to answer maths questions by raising his paw the correct number of times, to the pair of liquid-eyed, ribbon-collared spaniels Landseer painted for wealthy businessman Robert Vernon in

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Patience: in Reynolds's *Miss Jane Bowles*, the girl's dog shows no resistance to her hug

Leonardo da Vinci's care and attention to fine detail are as evident in his studies of a dog's paw as in any great portrait

> 'Her bright button eyes tell a simple and unchanging story of love given and reciprocated'

1847. In other instances, what emerges is the artist's sense of wonder at his canine subject. The choice of a foxhound called Ringwood to sit for Stubbs in 1792 may have been that of the pack's owner, the Earl of Yarborough, but the portrait as completed suggests that Stubbs was as bowled over by the tricolour four year old as his hard-riding owner. A metalpoint drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, dating from the 1490s, depicts a single forepaw from multiple angles, with curling claws and soft pads: probably the wiry-coated extremities of a deerhound. In their straightforward realism, da Vinci's studies have something in common with one of the Wallace Collection's own treasures, featured here: a painting of her French otterhound Brizo by distinguished 19th-century *animalier* Rosa Bonheur. On the surface, Bonheur's is a lifelike portrait, lacking the anthropomorphic or allegorical dimension with which, for example, Landseer frequently invested his canine sitters. In celebrating Brizo's solid majesty and wire-haired sturdiness, Bonheur points to her own pride and affection and the bond of trust between dog and artist-owner that, happily, survives more than a century and a half after Brizo's death.

Few people can ever have been keener on commemoration than Queen Victoria. Once a lonely only child, isolated within her family as a result of her mother's unpopularity and lacking even a handful of friends of her own age, Victoria responded as an adult—one with deep pockets and, at Windsor Castle, kennels capable of housing 100 dogs at a time—by commissioning numerous images of the royal dogs. They include Landseer's famous painting of Prince Albert's favourite greyhound, Eos, a Christmas present from wife to husband in 1841, and a magnificently tactile portrait by the same artist of a dachshund, Waldmann, whom Victoria herself painted—less successfully but no less affectionately.

Like royals before and since, Victoria valued canine loyalty. To her dogs, the Queen was simply their owner—just as a Maltese terrier painted by Stubbs in 1787 betrays no consciousness of its privileged existence as the darling of Lady Archer. Dwarfed by an arching foxglove stem, it is happy in its playfulness, proof of the lively relationship of owner and pet. In many of his paintings of dogs, Stubbs revealed a genius for capturing without sentimentality a dog's effervescent *joie de vivre*.

A group of paintings by Landseer, at the heart of 'Faithful and Fearless', shows how the Victorian master simultaneously satisfied the picture-buying public's fondness for narrative and moralising details and a loving →

For David Hockney, painting his beloved dachshunds offered solace at bad times

admiration for dogs themselves, which would in turn be stimulated by Landseer's own heroic, sometimes overtly moving imagery. Here are dogs symbolising African-American slaves, as representatives of the judiciary or ponderously recalling Christian teaching, as in *Doubtful Crumbs* of 1858–59, a reworking of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus from St Luke's Gospel.

> 'He spent hours observing his dogs at play and asleep. "I was painting my best friends"'

Few exhibits, however, come as close to capturing popular feelings about dogs as a group of paintings in which artists portray their own pets. In Thomas Gainsborough's *Tristram and Fox*, from the mid 1770s, the fashionable portraitist preserved the easy companionship of what appear to be a collie and a spaniel, delighting in the fall of light on silken fur—as lustrous as any furbelow in a Georgian lady's portrait—and the bright glimmer in Tristram's amber gaze. Gainsborough evidently loved both the painting and the dogs themselves, as it hung above the chimneypiece of his London drawing room.

Markedly different in style and execution is the series of vibrant oil sketches of his dachshunds Stanley and Boodgie made by David Hockney at a moment of personal loss in the mid 1990s. Reeling from the death of four close friends within six months, Mr Hockney spent hours observing his dogs at play and asleep. 'I realised I was painting my best friends,' he commented afterwards. As with images throughout the exhibition, his loving closeness is strikingly evident—even if Mr Hockney himself is nowhere to be seen.

'Portraits of Dogs: From Gainsborough to Hockney' is at the Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London W1, until October 15 (www.wallacecollection.org). A display celebrating the late monarch's connection with her dogs, 'The Queen and her Corgis', is on show there until June 25

Love set in stone

Waspishly, Fabergé's London agent, Henry Bainbridge, gave his opinion that 'the art of royal present giving' rested on the present costing as little as possible. In truth, the directive was Queen Alexandra's own and referred not to presents given by the royal couple, but *to* them; Edward VII's long-suffering consort made clear her wish that their friends not try to outdo themselves in the purchase of costly gifts. In 1907, Fabergé responded with a series of hardstone carvings of animals at Sandringham, the cheapest priced at £8 15s; among them were likenesses of the royal dogs. Alexandra, according to her private secretary, was 'such a regular dog-worshipper that Her Majesty likes all dogs—dogs of any breed or description'.

Among the best known of Fabergé's Sandringham menagerie, however, was a piece that proved altogether costlier. It was given to the Queen not by a friend, but her husband. Vassilka was a prize-winning borzoi, who had been a present to Edward and Alexandra from the latter's brother-in-law, Tsar Alexander III. Fabergé carved Vassilka's likeness from silver and mounted the small statue on an aventurine quartz stand.

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Return to magnificent Maastricht

After the dramas, the TEFAF fair is back as the art world's most important showcase

DESPITE the weather, it was a great pleasure to be back in Maastricht earlier this month as the TEFAF fair returned to its traditional place in the calendar. Last year's catch-up summer edition was somewhat underwhelming, but, this time, the confidence of the exhibitors and splendour of many exhibits reaffirmed the fair as the art world's most important forum.

By an unscientific test—the numbers of well-dressed wheelchair users with attendant retinues—very serious money was attracted to two days of previews before the public opening. Representatives of 250 museums and institutions were also there, apparently, with Americans much to the fore; some of their groups were 10-strong, despite all claiming to be short of funds. Both the London and Edinburgh National Galleries were observed, but other British institutions less in evidence.

> 'Charles Ede from London made 20 sales during the previews'

The truncated 2020 fair was something of a super-spreader, 2021 was cancelled and 2022 became notorious for the jewel robbery, which must have provided one of the most shared video clips of the year. The Dutch police recently announced that they are concentrating on a Balkan criminal group. One stolen item has been recovered, but the greatest mystery remains: who was that remarkable elderly gentleman sitting unmoved on a bench next to the sledge-hammering smash-and-grabbers?

Most people assumed that the hammer and weapons must have been secreted in the hall during set-up, but I have been told that the gang had them strapped to their backs, thus their unseasonable coats. In any event, security was much more in evidence this time, with some professional-looking dogs and new gate scans at the entrance.

Fig 1 above: ***Girls on the Beach*** **by Joaquin Sorolla, a highlight work sold by Artur Ramon. €2.7 million.**
Fig 2 below: **A pair of cased Jamaican tortoiseshell combs, dated 1670. Sold by Zebregs & Röell**

Inside, oysters were back on offer among the canapés, *broodje*, *kroketten* and *bitterballen* at the preview, but alas, not the peripatetic providers of beer from tanks on their backs.

A Showcase section of small booths has been included since 2008 to encourage selected dealers who have been running their own businesses for between three and 10 years. It is similar in spirit to the BBC New Generation Artists scheme and many previous stallholders are now regular participants in the 'grown-up' fair. This time, the number was raised from seven to 10 and they gave great hope for the future of the trade. By the second preview morning, most, if not all, had made sales and one, Elliott Fine Art from London, had almost sold out. Will Elliott offers 18th-century to early-modern paintings and he has found a speciality to fit the times in likenesses of non-Europeans by European artists. He sold several, including the 31½in by 22¼in *Lea, a Bride from Bethlehem* by Albrecht de Vriendt (1843–1900) to a US museum for a low six-figure sum **(*Fig 3*)**.

Another Showcase exhibitor, Zebregs & Röell of Amsterdam and Maastricht, specialists in colonial furniture and works of art, sold 12 objects in the first two days. Although the partnership (and one partner) is young, Guus Röell is an old hand, well known from selling dinners in his Maastricht base during previous fairs. One sale here was a pair of cased Jamaican tortoiseshell combs **(*Fig 2*)** dated 1670, making them the earliest by their presumed maker, Paul Bennett, the only registered comb maker in Port Royal. The combs were toothed for hair, wigs and lice, and they were decorated with →

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Fig 3 above: ***Lea, a Bride from Bethlehem*** **by Albrecht de Vriendt. Sold by Elliott Fine Art.** *Fig 4 below:* **A Neolithic goddess. €90,000**

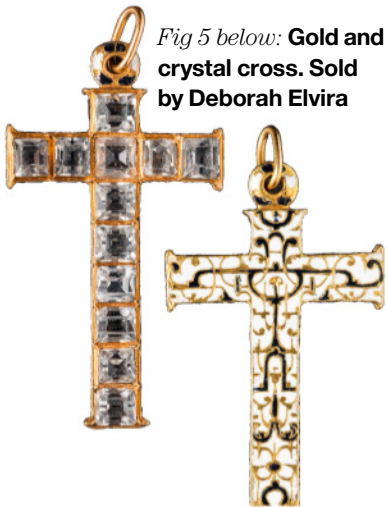

Fig 5 below: **Gold and crystal cross. Sold by Deborah Elvira**

local flowers and motifs in the same way as another cased pair mentioned here a decade ago (*Art market, April 24, 2013*). The dealers had acquired them in London a couple of years ago. Bennett, or perhaps his son, continued to decorate such things until 1692, when an earthquake destroyed much of the town.

Early sales by established exhibitors in the body of the fair were recorded in all categories, from antiquities to contemporary design—herewith a small selection. Among the most active antiquities dealers was Charles Ede from London, which made 20 sales during the previews. One, an Egyptian steatite *shabti* (a small figure of a mummy) for Ity, vizier of Thebes, from the New Kingdom, late-18th Dynasty with an asking price of €120,000 (£106,260), went to a new European client. A serpentine Neolithic Anatolian fertility goddess ***(Fig 4)*** was sold to a longstanding client at €90,000 (£79,695).

A collector paid Steinitz of Paris more than €1,500,000 (£1,328,250) for a magnificent Louis XVI eight-legged desk by Jean-François Leleu, which had belonged to Ernestine de Castellane, duchesse d'Otrante, widow of Napoleon's infamous police minister Joseph Fouché. Fellow Parisian Galerie Kugel reported the sale of an important 17th-century engraved ruby glass shell cup on foot by Johann Kunkel to a major Dutch museum.

Barcelona gallery Artur Ramon sold its highlight painting by Joaquin Sorolla, the 24½in by 39½in *Girls on the Beach* ***(Fig 1)***, for €2,700,000, and historic jewellery specialist Deborah Elvira from Oropesa del Mar between Barcelona and Valencia sold a medieval ring with sapphire and gilded silver and an early-17th-century gold and crystal cross ***(Fig 5)***.

Picks of the week

I was intrigued by two contemporary works by female makers, one Somerset born and working in East Sussex, the other Scottish. Sophie Coryndon's *Hortus Conclusus* (*below*) is a gessoed oak triptych with hand-sculpted, cast and gilded gypsum flowers and roundels. Made this year, its open measurements are 43½in by 57in, and its inspiration is the tapestry-like enclosed garden in the background of Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* in the Prado. She says the altarpiece 'as an art form, perfectly balances beauty and function, storytelling and invention, art and craft, spirituality, and practicality'. She models her 'goldwork' flowers using dental tools, jeweller's putty, plaster, paint, gilding and ink, and assembles them to create an 'illuminated meadow of wild flowers'. This work was with Adrian Sassoon of London, who tells me that, at the time of writing, it has been reserved by a major American museum at €78,000 (about £68,000).

For Elgin-born Georgia Russell, 'cutting out is a sort of freedom of expression. It's drawing, but I draw with a scalpel'. She 'draws' her three-dimensional works, such as the 2010 *Wild Waters* (*above*), which measures 56½in by 42½in by 6¾in and was priced at €65,000, by cutting old books and plexiglass to beautiful effect.

She now lives in France and this was shown by the Parisian Galerie Karsten Greve at €65,000.

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Putting Man on the map

Pevsner's Isle of Man
Jonathan Kewley (Yale, £45)

Worthy of joining the Pevsner library: the thatched fisherman's cottages overlooking Niarbyl Bay

UNTIL the publication of Jonathan Kewley's book, my scant knowledge about the ancient kingdom of Man amounted to the deathly TT motorcycle races, Manx cats without tails, Baillie Scott's inventive Arts-and-Crafts houses and Sir John Betjeman's elegiac essay, when he went 'tramping knee-deep in blaeberry bushes on the wild west coast', was exhilarated by the narrow-gauge railways and transfixed by the Tynwald Day celebrations. Now, Dr Kewley has transported me there in a rarity for Yale's 'Pevsner Architectural Guides': a 'Pevsner' without any input from the great man.

> 'The author believes Man "has long had a chip on its shoulder" about its architecture and he rectifies this'

Although recent guides have been revisions of his originals, Pevsner never got round to Man before completing the English series in 1974. As a result, Dr Kewley, albeit tied to the usual gazetteer format, is free to find his own distinctive voice without the 'Herr Professor-Doktor' breathing down his neck.

The author believes the Island 'has long had a chip on its shoulder that it has little architecture of interest' and he rectifies this with a host of excitements, not least the discovery, from a 10th-century inscription in Norse runes on a cross at Andreas, of the earliest artist in any Pevsner volume. This records the sculptor Gautr, who carved there in the Borre style of interlaced ribbons and ring-chains, which was later the inspiration for Archibald Knox's Art Nouveau pewter and silverware designs for Liberty's.

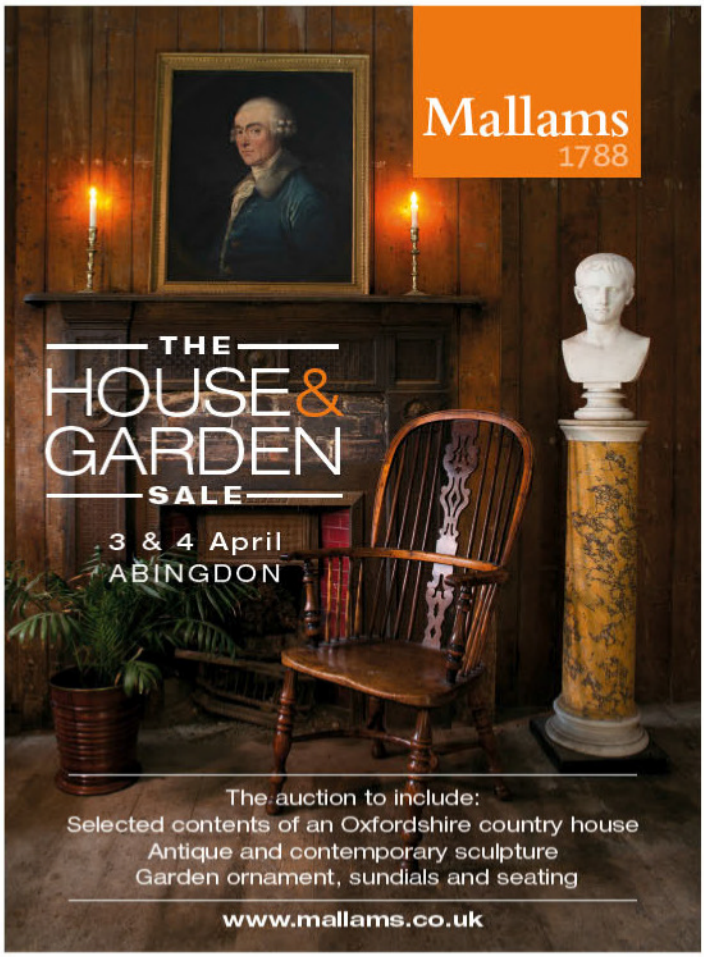
The island is unlike the English mainland, in that it comprises non-nucleated settlements rather than villages. In addition, there are four principal towns—Douglas, Castletown, Ramsey and Peel—which provide most of the architectural interest, although Port St Mary and Port Erin are worth exploring, especially for the former Collinson's Café in Port Erin, a domed and roughcast Edwardian confection, 'more Coptic than anything else'. The port, with its sandy beaches and fuchsia hedges, was the holiday destination for the upper middle class, whereas Douglas attracted the mill workers of Lancashire. Indeed, the most important architecture on the island dates from its heyday as a tourist attraction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The two most significant governors in the island's history were the 4th Duke of Atholl, who was appointed in 1793, and Lord Loch, whose tenure dates from 1863. The Duke brought in the Scottish George Steuart to design public buildings in Douglas, most now demolished, but his Castle Mona, a pale reflection of Robert Adam's castle style, survives on the Promenade, now empty since failing as a hotel in 2006. As for Loch's legacy, he masterminded the development of Douglas for tourism by creating the Loch Promenade, on land reclaimed from the sea, and encouraging local architects to design lodgings in 'the Boarding House Baronial' style.

The island's main claim to fame is its Arts-and-Crafts architecture, particularly that of Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott, who designed several domestic houses, a pub, a police station and a brilliant church hall. His Castletown Police Station is a subtle variation on Sir Robert Lorimer's Scots baronial, whereas Onchan Parish Hall, in its battered harled walls and sweeping roofs, is reminiscent of Voysey, although its timber open hall might have been transported from Herefordshire. One of Scott's pair of semis was commissioned for his Little Switzerland by the developer Mark Carine, who determined to provide the 'most artistic residences for Douglas', with names such as Clovelly Cottage and Ruskinville; Armitage Rigby, a Manchester architect who moved to the island in 1891, designed others.

The delight of a new Pevsner is to dip into it, either at random or directed, here via excellent photographs by the author himself and others commissioned from Colin Russell. I have already devised an itinerary that would take in the prehistoric Meayll burial circle at Cregneash, medieval Castle Rushen and Harry Clarke's stained-glass windows at Castletown, Cinderella tiles by Burne-Jones at Cronkbourne House, Robert Corkhill's Gothic villas and Giles Gilbert Scott's idiosyncratic Our Lady Star of the Sea, both in Ramsey. Not to mention the TT Grandstand at Glencrutchery Road, which, Dr Kewley remarks, in an arch aside of gallows humour that would have been beyond the lapidary Pevsner, is sited 'perhaps appropriately, in view of the casualty figures, opposite the Borough Cemetery'.

Timothy Mowl



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Books

The Tour: The story of the England Cricket Team Overseas 1877–2023
Simon Wilde
(Simon & Schuster, £25)

ONCE lengthy affairs arranged by private entrepreneurs, England tours are now much briefer and run by the national cricket board. The first Test tour of Australia, in 1876–77, had lasted 8½ months, because tours used to be funded by ticket sales and the more places the cricketers played at, the more likely was the venture to be profitable. Much of the revenue now comes from television broadcasters that want only the main event, crammed into a short period so as to avoid personnel and equipment lying expensively idle.

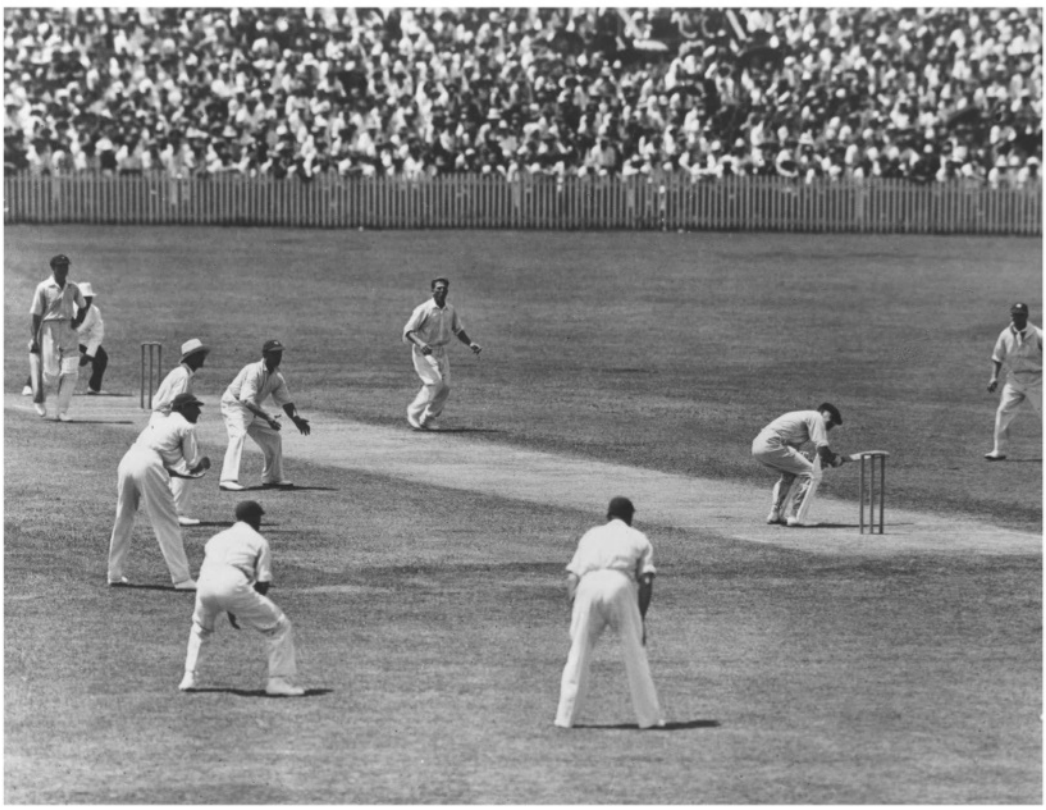
England tours now rarely actually tour a country. Instead, they visit only a few of its main cricketing centres. The day after last summer's Oval Test ended, England's players jetted off to Pakistan, the start of a winter that also involved series in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and Bangladesh and a T20 World Cup in Australia.

> 'Players could be selected with an eye to being a "good tourist"'

Test cricket was retrospectively declared to have begun on that 1876–77 tour, but that team did not represent England's best cricketing talent, a pattern often repeated, even when the MCC took over tour selection. Touring could be arduous and uncomfortable and was not attractive to everyone, especially those with family responsibilities. George Duckworth, too scared to tell his wife he had accepted an invitation to tour, left a note on the kitchen table: 'I'm going to Australia, I'll be back in April.'

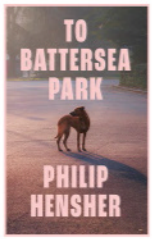
England tours played a role in the politics of the Empire. Captains were seen as ambassadors for the Mother Country, and picked as much for this as for cricketing ability. Tours involved a round of civic receptions and social events: Gubby Allen calculated that, on one tour he captained, he had to make 50 speeches. Other members could be selected with an eye to who would make a 'good tourist'. The reserve wicket-keeper needed to be someone who could cope with potentially playing little cricket. Paul Gibb, cast in this role on one tour, 'filled his time going to the cinema, eating ice cream and playing an astonishing amount of golf'.

Simon Wilde, cricket correspondent of the *Sunday Times* for a quarter of a century, has been on 47 tours himself. This entertaining account is as much social history as sports reporting, as he engagingly dissects the various political, economic, social and practical aspects of sending England teams around the world, as well as delving into how England teams can be successful overseas.
Roderick Easdale



Watch out: an Australian batsman ducks to avoid a rising ball from England in the 1932–33 Test

Paul Bulley; Getty



To Battersea Park
Philip Hensher
(Harper Collins, £16.99)

I REMEMBER wondering, in spring 2020, will I want to read novels set during the pandemic, after this is all over or will I avoid them like the plague, literally? The answer, now, is that I'm willing to read about the pandemic and its effects in fictional form only, in the hands of a master novelist and prose stylist. Philip Hensher is one. His new novel shifts from sublimely evoked reality to terrifyingly, clearly imagined dystopia. From the start—'The State gave an order. We obeyed the order. Everyone obeyed the order. And the world changed'—I was gripped.

We begin in south London, where one half of a gay couple is padding about in his house, making coffee in the silence of those early months of social distancing. 'We started to notice things,' he writes. In the silence, rage breaks out in a nearby flat. We enter other stifling lockdown situations, some interconnected, some seemingly isolated. We are immersed in each world: a builder's wife sick of her unappreciative husband; sweet, aged parents, one with dementia; a child casually abused by his father.

For me, the most powerful chapter is an 80-page one in the middle, where we find ourselves in a bungalow in Whitstable with Quentin in an exaggerated version of lockdown in which society has wholly broken down: no electricity, nothing in the shops, no water and looters terrorising the population. I'm haunted by Quentin's long walk from Whitstable to Ramsgate.

Then, in a different and more childlike font, is a section written from the point of view of a man with covid—the same man we met in chapter one. The language goes all childish; he can't name everyday objects. Yes, that is what illness is like. God spare us. Next, in this weird convolution of reality and imagination, the waters rise, immersing the whole of Battersea.
Ysenda Maxtone Graham

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New kid on the block

The new Línea Maestra line by Cuba's Partagás is worthy of enthusiasm

NO 520 Industria Street may not sound like the most evocative or romantic of addresses, but, to cigar lovers the world over, it has the resonance of Tower Bridge, the Taj Mahal and *la tour Eiffel*. It is, of course, the home of Partagás or, at least, it was. Back in the middle of the 2010s, production moved to what had been the El Rey del Mundo factory when I first visited it, in a warren of streets in Central Havana near the Romeo y Julieta factory.

Although the building no longer made cigars, it continued to sell them at the sprawling cigar shop. However, in 2020, at the height of the covid pandemic, this, too, closed and has now reopened at a very convenient location in the old town, roughly equidistant from the Kempinski hotel and the famous Floridita, creating a perfect golden triangle of hospitality, cigars and cocktails.

The old building is still just about standing, across the street from the back door of the Cuban Capitol. If the Capitol is a gleaming edifice of bright stone, with a gilded cupola that seems to glow, however, the Partagás building looks at best dishevelled and at worst downright dangerous. When I drove past in February, even the black-market cigar vendors that used to cluster outside had relocated. Partagás is more than a building, no matter how historic, so I was reassured and happy to find that the 23rd festival of Havana cigars was devoted to the marque.

Partagás is one of the stronger Cuban blends and the robusto-sized Serie D No 4 is one of the globally renowned benchmarks of cigar production. For a while, during the 1980s, when the heavier ring gauge cigars had fallen from favour, it was the only robusto in production. Partagás is also famous for its double corona, the Lusitania. But superstars as those two vitolas are, the brand has truly one of the most diverse portfolios, numbering almost three dozen shapes and sizes, ranging from the Salomon, a zeppelin-like double-ended figurado, to the plaited trio known collectively as Culebras.

The portly Maestro is the 56 ring gauge, 5¼in incarnation of the Partagás Línea Maestra, also available in Origen and Rito sizes

Moreover, 2018 saw the addition of a brand within the brand, the Partagás Maduro. Initially a special-release single cigar from 2015, three years later it had become a triumvirate of stout cigars imaginatively named Maduro No 1 (a sort of enhanced robusto with 52 ring gauge x 5⅛in), No 2 (a 55 ring gauge x 4¾in Petit Pirámides) and No 3 (50 ring gauge x 5¾in), their rich flavour leavened by a pleasingly sweet top taste imparted by the darker wrapper.

Now, we need to broaden our understanding of Partagás once more, with the arrival of the Línea Maestra. Línea Maestra is part of wider changes in the already complex and sometimes baffling taxonomy of Havana cigars: 2020 saw the introduction of the deluxe Romeo y Julieta Línea de Oro and, a few years before that, Montecristo's Línea 1935. Each Línea comprises three sizes, all featuring foot-bands, presented in fancy boxes of 20 cigars.

> 'It is much more than a couple of blingy bands and a shiny box'

The Línea Maestra premiered with much ceremony at a banquet and show on the closing night of the festival, featuring non-stop music (from classical string and choral works to Lady Gaga covers), dancing of multiple disciplines, the dispensing of prizes and, at one point, an entire carnival procession —before finishing with a concert by Boney M. In contrast with the variety and diversity of the entertainment, the cigars that were launched that night were tightly focused. In fact, I would go as far as saying that it was one of the most coherent launches of recent years and is much more than a regular Partagás with a couple of blingy bands and a shiny box.

Most significantly, the Línea Maestra is made from tobacco sourced only in the prestigious San Luis district of the Vuelta Abajo growing region. It has been a while since I drank any Grand Cru Burgundy, but it might help to think of San Luis as you might Domaine Romanée-Conti: an elite protected designation of origin within a larger appellation.

As well as the raw materials, the three cigars in the Línea Maestra are further set apart from the wider production of Havanas by a head that is neither the sharp point of a pirámide, nor the flat cap that closes the standard parejo, but a shape somewhere in between. Called the *cabeza tumbada* (dropped head), it is sufficiently seldom seen as to be immediately identifiable and so demanding in terms of a roller's skills that at the moment only half a dozen rollers at Partagás are qualified to make it.

The sizes, too, have been well thought out and are different enough not to encroach upon each other: Origen (46 ring gauge x 6in), Rito (52 x 6⅝in) and the portly Maestro (56 x 5¼in). For me, the Maestro is the outright winner: rich yet sophisticated, it embroidered rather than carpeted the palate with a delightful range of flavours. But, given that it was the third cigar I had ignited that evening (and about the sixth of the day), it was not perhaps the most rigorous of tastings. It will be interesting to try all three vitolas again once the cigars have landed in the UK—as to when that will be, I have no inkling. Nevertheless, do yourself a favour and call your cigar merchant to pre-order a box, as this line has already been described as being to Partagás what Behike is to Cohiba.

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Crossword

A prize of £25 in book tokens will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Solutions must reach Crossword No 4773, Country Life, 121–141 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, London, W2 6JR, by **Tuesday, April 4**. UK entrants only

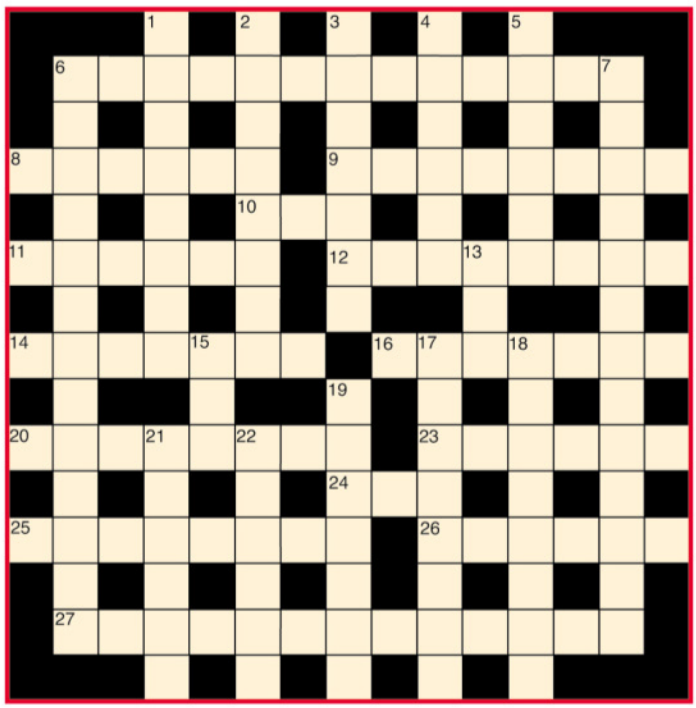
ACROSS

6 Large corporations get new clean rooms (13)
8 Film of oil (6)
9 Work for country at present (8)
10 Scrap metal king (3)
11 Black bird or dog (6)
12 Apology during dance (6-2)
14 Pole has string for bird (7)
16 Set back at theatre? (7)
20 Pick up counter (4,4)
23 Indicate container of gunk is worthless (2-4)
24 Initially your energetic support is okay (3)
25 Chide fish salesman (8)
26 I am dipped in flammable liquid as well (6)
27 Knight's saving items as a show of gratitude (13)

DOWN

1 Rare glen picture in projector (8)
2 To regale new inseparable friend (5,3)
3 Information gets more vague when moving up a touch (7)
4 Poignant that inflexible in charge (6)
5 Position good man by you and me (6)
6 Consistent journalist (13)
7 Promoter sorts equipment for assault force (13)
13 Employ American English (3)
15 Steal from microbrewery (3)
17 Hoard jam (8)
18 Cancelling out offer from gin agent (8)
19 Expensive to be in lofty position (3-4)
21 The French go up to harbour entrance (6)
22 State of baked pudding (6)

4773 **TAIT**



SOLUTION TO 4772

ACROSS: 7, Unenterprising; 9, Busier; 10, Asinine; 11, Stymie; 13, Specific; 14, Administrator; 16, Chiefdom; 18, Placid; 20, Russian; 21, Bisect; 23, Antiperspirant. DOWN: 1, August; 2, Semi; 3, Sturgeon; 4, Braise; 5, Aspidistra; 6, Inferior; 8, Reassessments; 12, Membership; 14, Adherent; 15, Republic; 17, Driver; 19, Incite; 22, Shaw.

The winner of 4771 is Michael Walberton, Surrey

Bridge Andrew Robson

THESE two deals come from the World Open Pairs Final in Wroclaw—truly a brutal event like no other.

You play 60 boards each day against a series of hungry tigers, waiting to pounce on every minor indiscretion (and my partner, Alexander Allfrey, and I made several). After four sessions, we were lying nearly bottom on 45%, although a late rally saw us end up only a fraction below average and semi-respectability.

On our first board this week, Allfrey-Robson doubled Five Clubs and collected a meagre 300 points, scant compensation for our Spade game and only 27% of the matchpoints. Our auction was One Club; Double; Four Clubs; Pass; Five Clubs; Double; end: Spades never bid. Only one pair, Donati-Percario of Italy, attempted Six Spades.

Dealer East
North-South Vulnerable

	♠ 762 ♥ J1092 ♦ KQ863 ♣ 3	
♠ J108 ♥ 54 ♦ 97 ♣ QJ10874	N W+E S	♠ 5 ♥ KQ86 ♦ J542 ♣ AK92
	♠ AKQ943 ♥ A73 ♦ A10 ♣ 65	

South	West	North	East
			1♣
Dbl(1)	4♣	4♦(2)	Pass
6♠(3)	End		

1) Too strong for One Spade.
2) Pushy, but North wants a Diamond lead and it generally pays to stick your neck out when you have one powerful feature.
3) Facing partner's hoped-for ♦KQJxx, there are 12 tricks.

An opening red-suit lead would have defeated the slam, but West led a normal Queen of Clubs, East overtaking with the King to switch to the King of Hearts. Declarer won, ruffed a second Club, and ran all his Spades, discarding Hearts from dummy.

What could East discard on the sixth and final Spade? He had to keep all four Diamonds, so away went the Queen of Hearts, East having to hope his partner held the precious seven of Hearts. It was not to be—declarer cashed that now-promoted seven and claimed his slam.

On our final Wroclaw deal, a fine lead-directing double by my partner brought home the bacon.

Dealer West
North-South Vulnerable

	♠ A865 ♥ K7 ♦ 8765 ♣ AQ8	
♠ KJ109732 ♥ 92 ♦ J43 ♣ J	N W+E S	♠ - ♥ 10854 ♦ K109 ♣ 1097642
	♠ Q4 ♥ AQJ63 ♦ AQ2 ♣ K53	

South	West	North	East
	4♠(1)	Pass	Pass
Dbl(2)	Pass	5♠(3)	Dbl(4)
6♥(5)	End		

1) Trading on the favourable vulnerability. West would open Three at all other 'colours'.
2) Primarily for take-out, even at this high level.
3) I must say, I'd have passed. If this North had passed, the tall West player would probably have gone six down for -1,400 and 25%. The Israeli North looked for a vulnerable slam, which would score (in the case of Hearts or Notrumps), slightly more than 1,400.
4) For the lead—hoping North-South don't reach Notrumps (in which case, clearly, the last thing East wants is a Spade lead).
5) Should South pass and await developments rather than seeking to declare with his worrying holding of Queen-low of Spades? Would North-South then reach the unbeatable Six Notrumps? Note, Six Notrumps succeeds by playing a Diamond to the Queen, cashing the Ace and leading a third Diamond to set up the 13th card.

Without East's double, West would surely have led his singleton Club, enabling declarer to succeed—by drawing trumps and playing on Diamonds for three tricks—as per Six Notrumps. However, West now knew to lead a Spade, choosing the Knave.

Although declarer correctly played a low Spade from dummy. East ruffed and exited safely with a Club. Declarer won, drew trumps, crossed to a Club, and led a Diamond to the Queen. However, there was no 12th trick—as setting up the 13th Diamond involved losing the third round, and you'll never make a slam if you've lost two tricks beforehand.

Goodbye Wroclaw–a lovely place, full of hope, rebuilt almost entirely after the war (it was Breslau).

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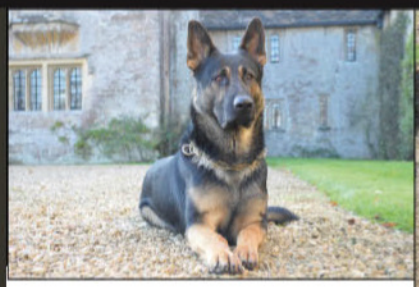

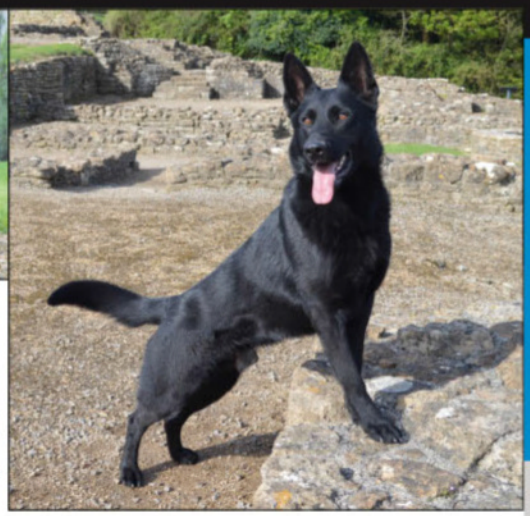

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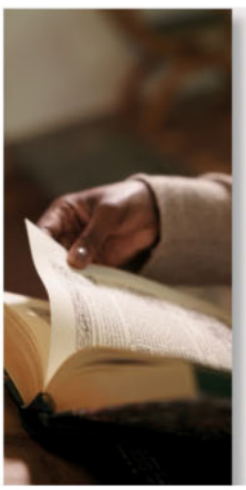

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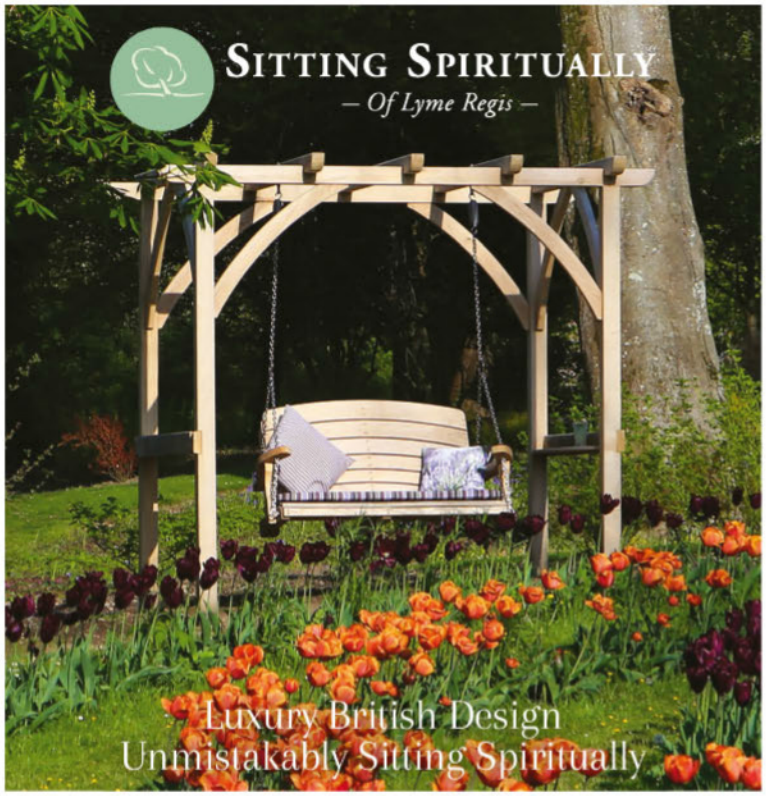

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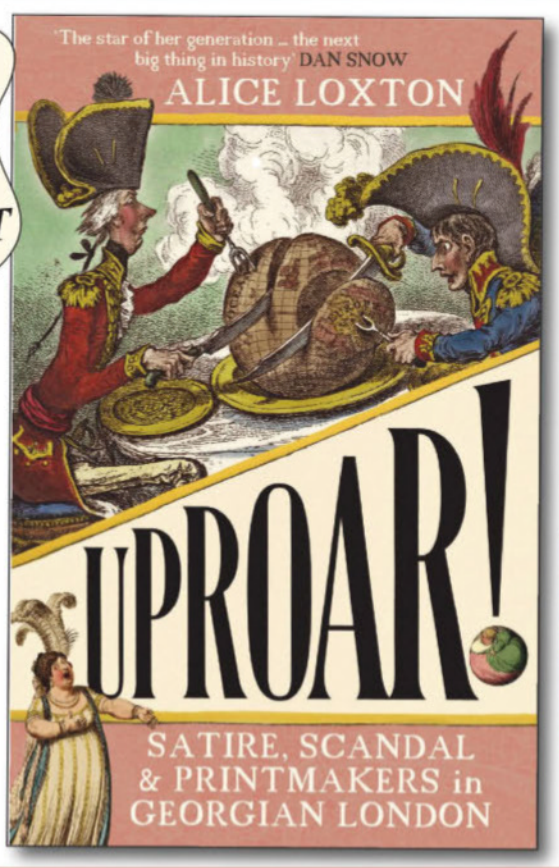

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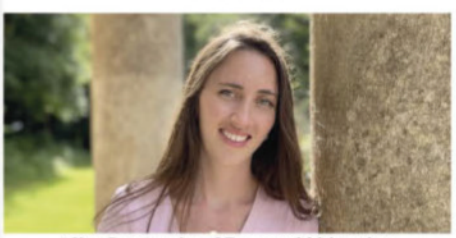

Alice Loxton is a 27-year-old historian, TV presenter and has over a million followers across Instagram and TikTok.
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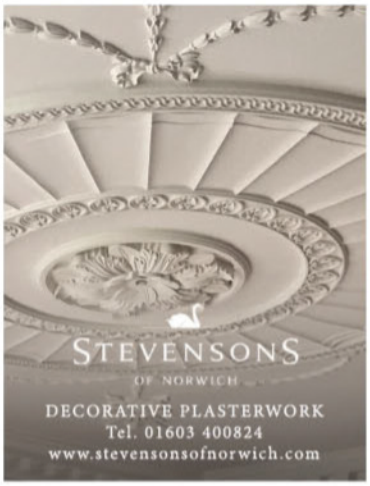

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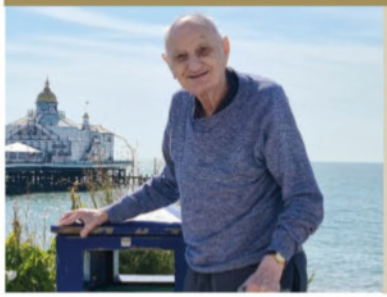

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Jason Goodwin

All my own work

LOCKDOWN arrived three years ago this month, along with a heatwave: I see the boys tinkering with bikes in the garden, Izzy and me making cucumber frames out of old windows. Not, admittedly, for usefulness alone, for, although a productive vegetable garden has a beauty of its own (plants in serried rows, like buttons on a card; beanpoles and wigwams breaking the skyline), I treasure a Platonic archetype of the ideal. It is inspired and buttressed by the astounding gardens at West Dean, for example, where we used to live, hemmed in by sunken glasshouses made by Foster & Pearson in the 1890s; or my aunt's potager in a Wiltshire village, set about with crooked apple trees; or a display at the Haslemere Museum of Helen Allingham's impossibly charming Surrey cottages, with the housewife at her gate and children spilling like phlox into the rutted track.

My earliest and deepest inspiration comes from Beatrix Potter's illustrations of the world's most famous potager, a paradise rife with beauty, danger, parsley and fresh carrots. Detailed over three books, including *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies*, Mr MacGregor's exemplary vegetable garden presents, among other features, a small pond, a cucumber frame, a brick wall, a shed full of pots and galvanised watering cans, half an acre of cabbage and an old pear tree.

Therefore, in the hours spent this past week or two filling trays with seed, I've been sustained by a late-summer vision, animated by the cawing of rooks and the flutter of pigeons in the beeches, the artful rake leaning against a wall, the spade thrust meaningfully into the ridges of the potato patch, the galvanised watering can brimful on the path and all the other pleasant clichés of the garden at evening.

We were actually making do with chimney pots for the rhubarb, until Kate secured a bargain at auction: three battered and voluminous forcers, some 3ft tall, that might have issued from a walled vegetable garden furnished by Foster & Pearson themselves. Merely looking at them raised my game to F&P level and, for sheer pride, I stood them out by the drive, clustered together like beehive houses for neolithic midgets. Pride, in Lent, should be held in check, or else it may be curbed for you.

> 'A nameless friend backed over all three pots, leaving them shattered'

A nameless friend, who for convenience I will call V, for Veronica, came in a van for lunch and left by backing over all three pots, leaving them shattered into heaps of various sizes, from dinner plate to microflake.

I like to remember the Ottoman pasha recorded by Edward Lear who, when Lear had trampled all over his amber-smoking apparatus, merely waved a hand and declared that, although, in ordinary circumstances, the breaking of his mouthpiece would be unfortunate, in a friend, every action has a charm. So when I ran into V a week later and she told me she was looking for forcers to replace those that broke under her wheels, I was able to ape the pasha. The evenings I'd spent sticking the pots together with Gorilla glue and Milliput had been, in a way, the most satisfactory of the season, on a par with the halcyon days of early lockdown.

The Japanese know all about it: they fix broken china with a thread of gold, which enhances the beauty of the piece and adds to its story. They call it *kintsugi*. I skipped the gold—the more robust terracotta pots required clamps and glue—but, in the end, I love them even more than before. They are now my work, the making of my own hand and eye, and I hardly think gardening has known such satisfaction since Mr Foster first clasped hands with Mr Pearson.

Next week **Jonathan Self**

TOTTERING-BY-GENTLY By Annie Tempest

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